

The STORY
of
RICHARD
TRENT



Mr & Mrs R. A. Lampley





THE STORY OF RICHARD TRENT

BY

MARY HORNIBROOK CUMMINS

Author of "The Awakening," "Renatus," "Out
of the Mouth of Babes," etc.

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CHAPTER I

Bishop Carrington laid down the current number of the *Twentieth Century Review*, his mouth compressing itself into lines which temporarily obliterated its habitual sweetness. His eyes, around which the passing years had traced a network of fine wrinkles that gave to his face a shrewd and yet very kindly look, focussed themselves unseeingly on the back of a passenger who occupied the Pullman seat just in front of him. He was searching mentally for a clew, and when he found it he made an unconscious affirmative movement of the head.

“Richard Trent,” he thought briefly.

He took up the magazine again and read on—

“How can the church claim that it is giving to the world the evangel which Christ Jesus brought, when the power of Christian healing has departed from it? Is not the undivided

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garment of salvation from sickness and sin needed by men and women today, just as truly as it was needed by the publican and the sinner and the leper of Galilee? Where is the divine ‘peace be still,’ which the Master spoke to the raging of human passion and the tempest of human woe? The time has come when we can no longer shirk these questions. The revival of the Christ healing which is sweeping over the whole world, and through which thousands of men and women are being restored to health and holiness, brings us face to face with the fact that the Christian who is not casting out evil and healing the sick, to some extent at least, through the power of the ever-present Christ, is very far from measuring up to the standard which the Master Himself gave—‘He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also.’ ”

The article was entitled, “Why Has the Church Lost the Power of Christian Healing?” and was signed, “A Clergyman.” It was written with a directness, a fearless dealing with facts, which Bishop Carrington instantly recognized. There were not many clergymen, in his diocese at least, who could

handle a subject in the masterly way in which this one was handled. There was only one, as far as he knew, who would have felt it incumbent upon him to deal with this particular subject at all.

"Yes, undoubtedly, Richard Trent," he thought, and considered, with inward thankfulness, how very fortunate it was that he would have an opportunity to talk with this young man within a few hours. For the Bishop was even now on his way to the thriving New England city of Morriston, where on the following day he was to preach and administer the rite of confirmation at St. Luke's church, of which Richard Trent was rector.

He drew a notebook from his pocket and made an entry, "Christian Healing. *Twentieth Century Review*. Read again." His duties were so multifarious that, with advancing years, he did not dare to trust his memory, and this article demanded more careful attention. Having tabulated the matter, as it were, he put the magazine in his bag, and it was characteristic of him that having done so he dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

As his eyes turned to the car window he drew a deep breath of pleasure and the lines of his face relaxed. The Berkshires in October! It was little short of criminal to let one's eyes rest on a printed page while the train passed through such scenery! Flaming maple and darkling pine reflected here and there in some nestling lake or pond. Wooded slopes and spaces of open country. Then, farther on, orchards vivid with ripened fruit, winding rivers and stretches of pasture, whose blending of mellow shades told of summer glory past. All this rushed by in panoramic display, gladdening Bishop Carrington's heart. He felt somewhat as a mother might, who having seen many beautiful children is compelled to admit the greater loveliness of her own. For Massachusetts was his birthplace, and he loved its every wooded hill and nestling lake with the rare affection of a man who has come to love even inanimate things. Its appeal, no matter what the season of the year, never found him unresponsive, and that response welled up now in the favorite lines of his favorite poet—

"The year's at the spring;
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!"

As the train rushed on he waved his hand to a boy who high up in a chestnut tree was shaking off the coveted nuts for a group of youngsters below. They probably did not see him, but the action was quite involuntary with the Bishop. Half a century ago he might have been that very boy in that very tree! Dear, dear, those old days! It filled him with a sweet sadness to think of them. And yet life had yielded him a great deal more than it did to many men. He had retained his ideals, he had worked strenuously, he had gained the love of a large number of people. It sometimes grieved him to think that his years of usefulness to the church which he loved and served were growing fewer with, apparently, such appalling rapidity. To be again in the prime of life, to have once more

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those opportunities which he felt had not been used to the utmost—what a useless wish!

“Ah, well!” he meditated, “no one is indispensable, and I suppose we ought to be glad that it is so. We labor and other men enter into our labors; that seems to be the order of things.”

His thoughts had come back to Richard Trent and his face grew graver.

“We must not lose him—we cannot afford to lose him,” he said determinedly.

CHAPTER II

At Springfield, Bishop Carrington left the Pullman car and took a local train for Morriston. Intensely interested as he always was in his fellow men he rather enjoyed riding in a day coach, as it gave him an opportunity to study types. New England especially, where the foreign-born element was pronounced and nationalities consequently intermingled, appealed to him. There was, indeed, no book so interesting to him as the book of human nature.

He soon found himself fitting a group of French-Canadians, who sat across the aisle from him chattering with realistic pantomime, into the great Northwest. He wondered whether any of them had ever buckled his belt tighter across an empty stomach as he tramped over the snow. He shuddered a little as he thought of the traffic which such stalking in frozen wastes implied. He had recently read

in a weekly periodical an article entitled, "The Harvest That Was Never Sown." It was merely an account of what one man had seen of "bared rib and stripped flesh" in the wholesale slaughter of wild animals to supply the markets of the world with furs, but it left Bishop Carrington so sick at heart that the involuntary cry was wrung from his lips, "Oh! Lord, how long?"

The cheerful commercial chat of two travelling salesmen directly behind him, who were most evidently of Semitic origin, brought a sense of relief from the troubled thought which the sight of the French-Canadians had awakened. He was pondering on the wonderful business enterprise and perspicacity of the Hebrew race, their patient plodding in the face of every rebuff, when a new interest presented itself. At Wayville, the last station before Morriston, the French-Canadians got out and a man with three small children took their places. Evidently a mechanic, the Bishop surmised; indeed his hands proclaimed as much. The children were comfortably clothed, but a woman would have seen at a glance that they had not been dressed, on this occasion at least,

by a mother's hands. There was a "loose-end" appearance about them which proclaimed the lack of that more exacting care. The youngest, a baby whom the father carried, was expending all the force of her lusty young lungs in protest against some personal discomfort, or existence in general. The next, a little girl of three, who did not appear to be very strong, looked as though she needed but little encouragement to change her sister's solo into a duet. The eldest, a boy of five, was so possessed with a desire to kneel on the seat and gaze out of the window that he paid little heed to anything else.

Something else was disconcertingly thrust upon his youthful attention, however, for one of the baby's plunging hands inadvertently came into contact with his right eye. Instantly he abandoned the window and a wail rent the air which completely dominated the weaker plaint; the little girl setting up a doleful whimper as accompaniment to the ear-splitting duet.

Out of sheer compassion for the man Bishop Carrington stepped into the aisle and lifting the boy set him on his knee. He drew a soft

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white cambric handkerchief from his pocket and applied it to the eye.

"Now let us see if we cannot make it all well again," he said in his kind, genial voice. Withdrawing the handkerchief he feigned surprise. "Was *that* the eye? No, it must have been the other!"

The boy, who had stopped crying, partly from surprise and partly because he was already beginning to forget that he had been hurt, pointed with one besmeared forefinger to the supposedly injured member.

"Let me see if you can blink it?" the Bishop suggested. "See how I can blink mine."

Not to be outdone the little fellow immediately followed his example, and a blinking contest between him and the Bishop ensued, which so entertained the other children that they ceased crying and began to laugh, the baby bouncing up and down in her father's arms while the tears were still wet on her cheeks.

Glancing at the man, Bishop Carrington saw that the relief which overspread his face at this happier turn of events was quickly dispelled by an expression of deep gloom. The Bishop looked around, attempting to fit any of

the women in the car to the forlorn little group, but did not succeed. It occurred to him that the man looked just as motherless as did the children. He sat holding the baby listlessly, gazing out of the car window with an expression of bewildered misery, his whole attitude heavy with trouble. Once or twice he glanced uncertainly at the Bishop, then he spoke.

"You're a minister, ain't you?"

"I am a clergyman of the Episcopal church," the Bishop replied, leaning across the aisle as the other had done. "Can I be of any service to you?"

"I'm takin' these children to see their mother," the man said jerkily. "'Twill be the last time they'll ever see her, I guess, if what the doctors say is true."

"It may not be as bad as all that," the Bishop encouraged. "Doctors are not always right, you know."

The man made a hopeless movement of the head.

"Where is she?" the Bishop asked.

"At the city hospital in Morriston."

"Did you—" the Bishop paused and then

continued gently—"would you like me to go with you? Was that what you wanted?"

"Yes, sir—" the other spoke thickly—"I'm not much on religion myself, but if it's as the doctors say—"

"I will go with you," Bishop Carrington said unhesitatingly.

During the brief interval before he reached Morriston he pondered on the tragedy of the situation upon which he had stumbled. He was constantly paying the penalty of those who love their fellows by being unwittingly drawn into such conditions. But then, as he reminded himself, that was part of his mission in life. When they arrived at Morriston he took his little partner of the blinking contest by the hand. The father carried the baby, while the other child trailed along dispiritedly, dragging on his arm. Bishop Carrington hailed a taxicab.

"You will not want to waste any time, Mr. ——" he paused with a question in his voice.

"John Barnes is my name, sir."

"You will not want to waste any time, Mr. Barnes," the Bishop repeated as he helped the

children into the taxicab. Turning to the chauffeur he added, "Get to the city hospital as rapidly as you can."

As they entered the large brick building the Bishop recognized the fact that the mental atmosphere of the place was as distinctly permeated with acquiescence in the inevitableness of suffering as was the air with antiseptics, and he instantly perceived what a factor against recovery this must be. He led the two elder children into a reception room while the father went ahead to an inquiry desk.

He had not long to wait. When John Barnes returned it was not he but a white-capped nurse who carried the baby, and the contrast between her air of hygienic aloofness and the tragedy writ large on her companion's face struck Bishop Carrington as incongruous. Barnes staggered slightly and put one hand on the long mahogany table to steady himself. His eyes had the blank stare of a man confronting a wall beyond which he cannot see.

"She's . . . dead," he said thickly.

CHAPTER III

As Bishop Carrington stepped from the taxicab in front of St. Luke's rectory Richard Trent came hurrying up, hat in hand.

"I missed you, Bishop," he said, apologetically; "I was just two minutes late in meeting the train, and you must have left the station before I got there."

"I did leave immediately," the Bishop replied gravely. "I will tell you about it when we get indoors."

He laid his hand affectionately on the younger man's shoulder as they entered the house. The very sight of Richard Trent always stirred in him a fatherly feeling. He liked the broad, white brow under the rather wiry dark hair; he liked the strong mouth, with that suggestion of feminine tenderness which is so far removed from effeminacy, but he liked best of all the fearless soul that looked at him out of Richard Trent's dark blue eyes.

Bishop Carrington did not forget to exchange a word of friendly greeting with Richard's elderly housekeeper, who opened the door for them, and who had been with the Trent family in one capacity or another for many years. Indeed, the faculty for remembering everybody he had ever met was one of the things which endeared him to a large number of people.

"I have had a singular and very saddening experience," he said when Richard had taken his hat and coat; and he went on to relate his meeting with John Barnes and its result.

"A young woman, she must have been," he said reflectively, "for Barnes himself is not much over thirty. What a calamity for him and his little children—what a calamity!"

Richard did not reply and the Bishop continued.

"You must look him up and keep an eye on him for awhile, Richard. He's the kind of man that misery may drive to drink, or worse. He is not affiliated with any church, I know, from what he said. Rather the type of fellow who would have been an enthusiastic follower of Robert Ingersoll, I imagine—easily led and

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easily influenced either for good or evil, you can see that by his face."

"What are he and his children going to do tonight?" Richard asked.

"He has a sister here. They will stay with her until after the funeral. It is not now that he will need help so much, but when he goes back and tries to take up life again. That will be the test, and a hard one."

"What can one say to a man under such conditions as these?"

Bishop Carrington opened his lips to suggest what he would have said to any other clergyman in his diocese under similar circumstances, something about resignation to the will of God, but he met Richard Trent's eyes and the words remained unspoken.

"I never come into contact with woe of this kind," Richard went on, "that I do not feel utterly inadequate to deal with it. Here is a man in the prime of life, bereft of his wife and left to take care of three motherless little children. Can I go to him and tell him that *that* is the will of God?"

"We must take the bitter with the sweet in

this world. Barnes must be brought to see that and to bear his trouble like a man."

"That is a hard philosophy to present to a man who is in the clutch of an overwhelming bereavement. He will ask me, Why need it have happened? And what shall I say to that?"

"'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?'" the Bishop quoted.

"Yes, but the thing formed must be in accord with the thought that formed it. Love cannot cause suffering, nor can death be the outcome of life."

Bishop Carrington's expression changed, almost imperceptibly. It was some minutes before he spoke.

"I read your article in the *Twentieth Century Review* as I came along in the train," he said gravely.

"Then you knew who wrote it, Bishop. I had intended to tell you today."

"Yes, I knew. I was not at college with your father for nothing. He had a way all his own of handling a subject and you have the

same. I always envied his directness, his ability to cope with things at close range, as it were. . . . When I was last here, Richard, you talked of a man—Boyce, was that the name?"

"No, Joyce—David Joyce."

"It was from him, I judge, that you imbibed some of the ideas which you embodied in that article?"

"No, I had begun to think along those lines before I knew David Joyce. In fact I believe I have always thought along them, more or less. I can remember wondering as a child why clergymen did not heal the sick as Jesus did. I often asked that question of older people and never got a satisfactory answer. I think I asked it of you, once."

"Yes, I remember, it was when you were ten years old."

"A book which I borrowed from David Joyce, however, and which I afterwards bought for myself, brought me a great illumination of thought and directed my reasoning. It was, to me at least, what it has been to thousands of others, a veritable 'key to the Scriptures.' "

The Bishop did not reply. He knew the

book to which Richard alluded; indeed, he had promised himself more than once that when he got time he would read it.

"David Joyce could go to this man Barnes," Richard said, "and bring to him what I could not."

"What is that?"

"Healing."

The Bishop's rather portly figure shifted a little in his chair. Richard Trent stood up and faced him.

"Here is a man," he broke forth; "Joyce, I mean, who ten years ago was a 'cub' reporter on a struggling daily paper. He may have graduated from High School, but if he did his schooling ended there. He does not always speak correct grammar, by any means. His use of forks would probably not meet with the unqualified approval of the women at whose tables you and I dine. As far as equipment for usefulness is concerned, from our stand-point he seems to have practically none. And yet I have seen—I have *seen* a child whose leg was in a steel brace for years restored to perfect health and soundness within a few months through this man's understanding of God. I

have seen a man who for a decade had scarcely drawn a sober breath, a weaver in Mr. Bennett's mill, with whom I had labored long and earnestly, released from the bondage of that curse. I know another, a mere lad, who was fast sinking into the lowest depths of immorality. Tomorrow morning and evening you may see him acting as usher in one of the most beautiful church edifices in this city, clear of eye and sound of body—regenerated. And these are only three out of thousands whom David Joyce and the men and women who have apprehended the truth which he has apprehended, are restoring to health and holiness."

He walked twice through the room. When he faced Bishop Carrington again his eyes looked black in the strained whiteness of his face.

"And what have I to show for my eight years of ministry?" he demanded, stretching out his arms as though to express utter emptiness. "Can I point to one man and say, My comprehension of the power of God brought to him release from sin? Can I say of one little child, What I was able to reflect of the infinite love loosed that little one from suffering?

I cannot . . . and it is a barren showing! All I can say, after the most earnest work of which I am capable, is, I hope I have accomplished some good. If I could show for my eight years of ministry what David Joyce, and others like him, can show for as many months I would be ready to sing my *Nunc Dimitis!*"

Bishop Carrington's eyes rested on him with deep but troubled affection.

"Sit down, Richard," he said gravely.

"Of the many things for which I am grateful to Robert Browning," he went on, after a moment, "I am, perhaps, most grateful for those lines in, 'A Death in the Desert,'

'I say the miracle was only wrought
When, save for it, no faith was possible,'

That expresses exactly my conviction on this subject."

"To put such words as those into the mouth of the man who lived closest to the Master, a man who had witnessed the raising of Jarius' daughter, who heard that marvelous declaration, 'He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also,' and who had proved that declaration to be true by healing the sick and

sinning, is to me a thing incredible!" Richard exclaimed. "One sometimes marvels how Browning can have come so close to the full vision as he seems to have done, and yet not have gained it. That plea is such a weak one; a solution which is no solution."

"Why?"

"Such a plan would be so manifestly unfair. What about the sick and the sinner of today? Is nothing to be done for them? Are they to be left to drag out years of bondage to the taskmasters of evil and disease? Suppose"—he leaned forward in his earnestness—"that the system of wireless telegraphy could only be practised by Marconi and the men whom he taught, of what real value would it have been to the world? Does not its worth lie in the fact that any man of ordinary intelligence who devotes himself to its study can gain sufficient understanding of it to operate it? And shall we claim less than that for the operation of spiritual law as demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth?"

The Bishop passed one hand slowly across his forehead, and Richard suddenly realized

that his face looked tired. He had had a rather long railway journey ending with a trying experience. A twinge of compunction seized the younger man.

"Forgive me, Bishop," he said, "I should not have started on this subject just now. Perhaps you would like to go to your room and rest for awhile before dinner?"

"Yes, I think I should. We can continue our discussion some time when I feel fresher."

He rose slowly. As they stood facing each other he laid his hands on the younger clergyman's shoulders.

"My boy," he said huskily, "do not let anyone . . . do not let anything draw you away from the church of your fathers!"

As he crossed the room toward the door he paused and turned. A thought had come to him, a thought which brought comfort, for it seemed to point to Richard Trent's salvation.

"By the way," he said, in an entirely different tone, "when are you going to be married?"

"Not before June. It is barely possible that Mrs. Bennett and Hilda may go abroad early in the New Year."

"Well, do not let the young lady defer it any longer than you can help," the Bishop counselled.

When the door closed behind him Richard Trent sat down and resting his elbows on his knees let his head fall in his hands. He was not thinking of the subject his Bishop had just introduced, but of what had gone before; and above the tumult of his thoughts there came to him like a clarion call the words of another man who had burst the bonds of ecclesiasticism in order to follow the truth which he apprehended — "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

CHAPTER IV

Bishop Carrington had spoken truly when he referred to the Episcopal church as the church of Richard Trent's fathers. For six generations, two in England and four in America, it had not lacked a Trent in its ministry. Indeed, at one time there had been three—Richard's grandfather and the latter's two brothers, and it was still told in the family that when the mother of these men was solicited for a contribution to diocesan missions she replied, with characteristic brevity, "I have given three sons to the support of the Church. Let others do as much."

His college friendship with Richard's father, and the high esteem in which he held the Trent family, were only two of many reasons why Bishop Carrington always enjoyed a visit to St. Luke's parish. He liked the simple form of service which Richard used, with the spoken instead of the intoned, "Amen," and he greatly appreciated the work of the vested choir,

which—under a director who had been for several years a chorister at Leicester Cathedral in England—had achieved more than local fame. Indeed, whenever Richard knew that the Bishop was coming he always notified his choir-master of this fact, and the result was invariably the careful rehearsal of some Stainer, Dykes or Barnby anthem; the Bishop's preference for the devotional music of these composers being well known.

On this particular Sunday morning the offertory was Stainer's beautiful harvest anthem, "Ye Shall Dwell in the Land," but, for once, Bishop Carrington gave a by no means undivided attention to its excellent rendering. His thoughts, as well as his eyes, rested on the pew where Hilda Bennett sat with her father and mother.

He had always regarded Miss Bennett's extreme love of ritual with that tolerance which he invariably accorded to preferences that ran counter to his own. In this instance the tolerance had not been wholly unmixed with mild amusement. He had even found himself wondering if she must not have practised her exaggerated, but undeniably graceful, genuflec-

tions at home, so dexterously were they performed. Even in the prayers her attitude differed from that of the people around her. It could not be said that she knelt—she crouched. During the Litany her extremely slight body seemed to huddle and collapse into itself in a very abandonment of repentance and renunciation. And yet she never renounced anything, and had very little of which to repent—that is consciously, for she was utterly unaware that her whole life was one great sin of omission in that she never, even for an instant, came close to the heart of humanity.

Nevertheless, she was what is called “active” in the church. She was president of the Altar Guild, which had charge of the choir-vestments and linen for the communion table, and during Lent she conducted a mission study class. She always opened the meetings of these societies with a Collect from the prayer-book. This she read with strict attention to pronunciation and punctuation, but in the wholly detached and unemotional tone in which she might have read aloud the weather bulletin from a daily paper. It would not be just to say that Hilda Bennett entirely neglected the “weightier matters of

the law, judgment, mercy and faith," but it is none the less true that the side of religion which appealed to her was that represented by the tithing of "mint and anise and cumin."

As Bishop Carrington's eyes rested on her now he found himself repeating, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Certainly it would have been difficult for Richard to find a woman who, as his wife, would hold him more closely to the church of his fathers than would Hilda! The Bishop forgot—or if he remembered, he thrust the thought into the background—the throb of dismay with which he heard of this engagement. "What could the boy, with his vivid nature, his love of his fellows and his heart hunger for God, find in this conventionally correct young woman?" had been his involuntary question. He had carried a heavy heart for several days after the news reached him. Truly he had never expected to see the day when he would find therein cause for rejoicing!

What the Bishop did not know was that Richard's engagement had come about at a time when he was vainly trying to satisfy the craving of his soul with extreme ecclesiasti-

cism. Others seemed to find therein that which satisfied them and why should not he? Hilda appeared to him, at this time, to be little short of a haloed saint. Her excessive slenderness lent her an air of asceticism. If her attitude during divine service did not represent true piety, what did? It was as though Richard cried to her, "Let me share your vision, show me what you see, I would enter the cloister of sanctity which you have entered." And no one but himself knew how appalling was the conviction which of late had begun to force itself upon him—that as far as Hilda Bennett was concerned there was no vision, and that satisfaction did not lie at the end of the well-worn path which she was treading.

Not alone Richard's father but his mother was among the friends of Bishop Carrington's youth. Adam Trent had died three months before his son was born, and his widow, who was a woman of rare spiritual perception, had relied much on Bishop Carrington in the upbringing of her son. She lived during the greater part of the year with a married daughter in Baltimore, but always spent a month or two in the summer with Richard. As the

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Bishop reflected now on the deep affection which existed between mother and son he felt an added sense of comfort. Truly the ecclesiastical bulwarks which surrounded Richard Trent's life were unusually strong!

CHAPTER V

It was an established custom that when the Bishop of the diocese visited St. Luke's parish he and the rector should dine with the senior church-warden. For the past ten years this pleasant duty had fallen to the lot of James Bennett, whose extensive carpet mills placed him in the foremost rank of Morriston's wealthy citizens, and who stood behind St. Luke's like some good elderly genii, always ready to make up any financial deficit at the end of the year, and there usually was a deficit.

The Bennetts' home, which was scarcely a stone's throw from the church, was a large, unsightly building that had suffered by renovation. It had long ago lost its once simple style of architecture in a hit-or-miss projection of ells, cupolas and bay windows, which offended the eye by their obvious inharmony with the original design. The grounds, however, were beautiful. The whole tract had been bought

as acreage by the present owner's father years before. It was now valuable central property, an oasis in a desert of brick apartment blocks, the fashionable part of the city having taken it into its head to grow in another direction.

People said that James Bennett's father had come to the United States with his worldly goods tied up in the proverbial red cotton hand-kerchief. Be this as it may, one thing was certain, that he thoroughly understood the trade of carpet weaving and had shrewd business instinct. He was fond of telling, especially as he grew older, that he had helped to weave the carpet which adorned the floor of Queen Victoria's bed-chamber, and would expatiate at great length on its wonderful richness and softness. His advent in America was at a time when there was money to be made in carpets, before the era of rugs and hard wood floors. At the end of ten years he owned his own mill and when he died he was reckoned among Morriston's rich men.

There were rumors at one time of some valuable inventions which should have belonged to a young workman in his employ, but which the elder Bennett claimed on the ground that as he

paid the man for his time the product of that time was his. A lawsuit was begun and for awhile the matter was aired in the daily papers, but as the workman had no funds the thing was dropped and the public heard no more about it.

The son of the present head of the firm, Bradford Bennett, did not, however, follow at all in the business footsteps of his father and grandfather. Indeed, he was as unlike both these men in appearance and character as he could well have been. Born of a brief but turbulent union between James Bennett and a handsome mill girl, he manifested from earliest infancy the same passionate temperament, self-will and intolerance of all restraint which during his mother's lifetime had made such a dark chapter in his father's experience.

When three years after his wife's death Mr. Bennett married again, his present wife—good woman that she was!—did everything in her power to win the boy's love and to instill into him some idea of self-control. In the latter attempt she utterly failed, but, as time went on, it became apparent that she was the only member of the family whom he regarded with any

degree of affection. For his step-sister, to use his own expression, he "never had any use." As she grew toward womanhood he made no secret of the contempt in which he held her ritualistic tastes. "Hilda always reminds me of a mechanical piano-player," he once said to a friend. "One no more expects her to make a *faux pas* than they expect the machine to play a wrong note. But, good heavens! what a relief the human touch in either case would be, even if it were not always correct."

At one time, when she returned from college, her brother's Bohemian manner of living seemed to cause Hilda much concern and she made systematic efforts to induce him to go to church, at least on special fast and feast days. On a certain Good Friday, when she urged him to accompany her to St. Luke's, he had touched a golden cross, which always hung round her neck at this season of the year, with his forefinger and said, "My dear, there was a *life* went before what that symbolizes. Go and copy that life and I'll take some stock in your religion." At the time she had shown no sign of offence, but in her heart she never forgave him that remark, and since then they had lived

their lives as far apart as though no tie of blood existed between them.

As the little group from St. Luke's now entered the grounds of the Bennett homestead, Bishop Carrington caught sight of a tall, muscular looking man, still in the early thirties, who was strolling near the back of the house, accompanied by an attendant in a white linen coat. That he had seen the church-goers was evidenced by the fact that he turned his back on them unceremoniously and walked in another direction. An involuntary sigh escaped Mrs. Bennett's lips, and the Bishop, recognizing that here was the skeleton in the Bennett closet stalking abroad, began with his usual tact to talk quite naturally of the beautiful rendering of the harvest anthem and to congratulate Richard on his choir-master. When Richard and he were alone for a few minutes in the library before dinner, however, he said in a carefully lowered tone—

“I see that Bradford is at home again.”

Richard nodded.

“His condition is somewhat improved, then?”

“I scarcely think so. He got tired of the

sanitarium, or took a dislike to one of the doctors, and left."

"Is there really any serious mental trouble?"

"That seems to be the unanimous opinion of physicians. They say it is a case of heredity and that his ungovernable temper, even as a child, gave evidence of mental unbalance. I remember what a fuss there was when he was expelled from college because he picked up a glass of water from the dinner table and flung it in the face of one of the professors. I was a freshman at the time and he was in his senior year, but we all knew about it. I once saw him in a rage and the only thing I could think of was that phrase which we think of now as applying to a past age—'possessed of a devil.' "

The Bishop shook his head compassionately.

"And it was not all over in a moment with him, as it is with some people," Richard went on. "It seemed to smoulder in him for days afterwards like a kind of seething fury. Then, by degrees, this would wear itself out and be replaced by a season of good spirits, generosity and reckless extravagance, which was just as uncontrolled in its way as the other condition,

and which was sure to end, sooner or later, in another explosion."

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!" the Bishop said pityingly. After a moment he added, "Where is his wife now?"

"In New York with her mother."

"And the child—I remember seeing her when I was here last, a beautiful little golden-haired fairy of three."

"Jean? She is with the mother and grandmother."

"I suppose there will be a divorce?"

"It will come to that, no doubt. They never should have allowed Lillian to marry him. Mrs. Bennett admits that now, and blames herself very much in the matter. But, at the time, she believed that marriage with a good girl might be his salvation. As if any mere human influence could overcome such a condition as that!"

A maid came to the door bringing Mr. Bennett's apologies. He had been called on the long distance 'phone, she explained, and would be detained a few minutes longer. The ladies would be down almost immediately.

The Bishop and Richard strolled through a

door leading on to a terrace which ran the entire length of one side of the house, and which was ornamented with very ornate designs in terra cotta. It was, indeed, the elder Bennett's last crime in the way of remodelling. Handsome enough in its way, it was utterly out of keeping with the rest of the structure. The Bishop glanced around him with a slight smile.

"The outside of this building always reminds me of certain people I know on whom prosperity does not seem to sit well," he remarked. "I once said as much to our host, knowing that he was not the guilty party! The simple symmetry of their characters seems to have lost itself in an unsightly projection of social ambition and extravagance. Some day, Richard, I am going to preach a sermon on, 'The vices of the virtuous.' I know one good woman who would think she was on the highroad to perdition if she went to a theatre, but who looks forward for days to a church supper and really overeats on such occasions to an alarming extent. What a deceiver the unenlightened human mind is!"

"A friend of mine who is a vocal teacher once said that every singer carried one liar about

with him in his own ear," Richard replied with a smile. "However that may be, it is certain that we all carry a very clever prevaricator around with us in our own human desires."

"Yes," the Bishop answered meditatively, "the glamour of human desire—who can penetrate it! But to return to Bradford Bennett, is there no improvement at all in his condition?"

"There is a change, but whether for the better or not it is hard to say. It has come about since Lillian went back to New York, taking the child with her. He was passionately attached to Jean in his own extravagant way. Since she has been gone he has sunk into a kind of gloomy resentment against everybody and everything and will not mingle with the rest of the family at all. He has his own rooms and keeps to them altogether. The violent outbursts of temper are less frequent and the periods of good spirits have passed away entirely. The physicians do not consider this favorable. They say it is the gradual settling down of the cloud. And yet, sometimes one gets faint glimpses of the real man. He will do something kind and merciful when one least

expects it. I saw him, one day last week, go out into the street at the back of the house and pick up a mongrel dog that had been run over. The animal was covered with mud, but Bradford carried it to his own rooms and has taken care of it there since."

"Poor fellow!" the Bishop repeated, with deep compassion.

"It was pathetic to see the dog trying to lick his face as he carried it into the house," Richard went on. "And Bradford's expression was a study. He seemed to feel that in some way they were alike—as if the Juggernaut of destiny had run over them both."

Richard gave an unconscious sigh as he finished speaking. His eyes looked away from Bishop Carrington over the exquisite tints of autumn foliage. Again he was aware of that feeling of incapacity, of which he had spoken to the Bishop. Here was a man in his own station in life, whose sister he was engaged to marry, and to whom he was utterly unable to bring one ray of hope or healing. He recalled what a deaconess in New York had once said to him, a beautiful, saintly woman who had been trained for her work in a deaconess'

school, "Mr. Trent, there is something that we have not got—something that would be the crowning glory of Christianity—I am firmly convinced of that; and I only wish I knew what it was or where to look for it." He had often remembered those words and the impressive way in which they were spoken. He knew that that woman felt just as he did, like a workman who is full of energy and ready for labor, but who realizes that his tools are inefficient, if not obsolete.

He was roused from his reverie as Mrs. Bennett and Hilda came out on the terrace. The latter had changed her tailor-made suit of dark grey for a long sweeping gown of sapphire blue crêpe, with touches of Oriental embroidery, in which she looked very graceful. Only the initiated recognized the fact that Hilda Bennett's gowns must cost a small fortune. Richard admired their apparent simplicity.

"You have not told me yet how the 'Children's Friend' Home is getting on," the Bishop said, turning to Mrs. Bennett.

"Beautifully," she replied eagerly. "We have begun on the extension, which will almost double our present capacity, besides giving us

a large play-room, which we sadly need. And, better than all, we have been so fortunate in our new matron—if one can call a young lady who is not yet twenty-five a matron!"

"If you once get mother started on the subject of Miss Bray's virtues, Bishop, you may make up your mind to listen to nothing else for the rest of the afternoon," Hilda put in, in her carefully modulated voice, which usually had the effect of making her mother feel that she had been covertly corrected.

Once launched on her favorite topic, however, it was not easy to stop her. A woman of strong maternal instincts, it was many years since she had found it possible to "mother" the self-contained young woman whom she called daughter. The little unnecessary and unrecognized things which she did for that daughter were pathetically significant of the unsatisfied yearning of her heart. With the birth of Bradford's child a change came, however, and for three happy years Jean completely filled her affections. Indeed, the parting from the little one was the great grief of her later life. It was imperative that the void should be supplied in some way, and a very practical way

presented itself in the founding of a home for neglected children. To this work she now devoted much time and a great deal of money.

"The fact that our first matron was so incompetent makes us value Miss Bray all the more," she said now. "I often think that there must be something very beautiful in her religion which helps her in her work. She has such perfect control over the children, and yet she is never harsh with them. In fact they love her so much that her word is law, and the worst punishment they can have is to feel that they have grieved her."

"I think I have heard my friend, David Joyce, speak of Miss Bray," Richard said quietly.

Hilda gave him a quick glance. She did not approve of his friendship with David Joyce, as he well knew. They had never discussed the matter, but her air of aloofness whenever David's name was mentioned spoke volumes.

"Miss Bray's father was Principal of the English High School here for a number of years," Mrs. Bennett continued. "He was considered the finest English scholar we had in the city."

"Yes, I have his book on 'Rhetoric and Composition,'" Richard commented. "There is none better that I know of."

"After his death Elizabeth—I have slipped into the way of calling Miss Bray by her first name a great deal of the time!—took a course in kinder-garten work," Mrs. Bennett went on, "which, of course, helps her greatly in her present position. It really astonishes me sometimes how a girl who is so eminently fitted, both by appearance and education, to shine in society should be willing to devote her life to the care of little children. There is something compellingly attractive about Elizabeth Bray."

"Mother dear, I think Kate is trying to tell you that dinner is served." Again Hilda's low voice broke in on her mother's enthusiasm and again the elder woman felt that she had been rebuked.

When they were seated at the table Bishop Carrington brought up the subject again, however, by asking—

"Is there much 'red tape' connected with getting children into your Home, Mrs. Bennett?"

"Practically none, Bishop. The ladies who are interested in the work with me agree that

too often with charitable institutions ‘while the grass is growing the horse is starving.’ Any neglected child can be taken care of in the ‘Children’s Friend,’ provided we have room enough for them, until something can be done to better their home conditions, or until suitable homes can be found for them. And really the way in which those little ones have been provided for—especially since Miss Bray took up the work—is quite marvelous.”

“There are three children in whom I am particularly interested just now,” the Bishop went on. “I trust they will never need the care which your good work makes possible, but if they should, I hope I may rely on your help.”

“Indeed you may!”

“They have just lost their mother. The father’s name is Barnes and he works in Wayville.”

James Bennett lifted his head quickly.

“John Barnes?” he asked.

“Yes. Do you know him?”

“No, but a man of that name once worked for my father; a man who made him a great deal of trouble. How old is this man Barnes?”

"Thirty-two or three, perhaps. He may be the son of your father's employee."

"Possibly."

Mr. Bennett's tone distinctly implied that the subject held no further interest for him and the Bishop adroitly changed it. After all, in enlisting Mrs. Bennett's sympathies on behalf of the Barnes children he had accomplished his purpose.

No opportunity seemed to present itself before he left Morriston for a continuation of the discussion which had taken place between Richard and himself on the previous evening, and, although the younger man was not aware of this fact, this was as the Bishop wished. "A great many fires die out for lack of fanning," he had once said to a friend, "and a great many that would otherwise die are kept alive by the breeze caused by wagging tongues." If the occasion arose, he would talk with Richard again, but he earnestly hoped the occasion would *not* arise!

CHAPTER VI

At the same hour that the party from St. Luke's entered the grounds of the Bennett home, David Joyce and a tall girl with abundant brown hair and very clear grey eyes were descending the steps of a new church edifice scarcely three blocks away. The architecture of the building was Grecian Ionic, the porch being an exact replica in size and detail of the north portico of the Erechtheum at Athens. Over the door, on the tympanum of the pediment, was a simple but beautiful device of a cross and crown. On the corner stone was engraved the one word, "PURITY."

Involuntarily David and his companion turned to look back at it with love and admiration.

"'A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid,'" the former quoted. "I hope it will be that, Elizabeth, or rather, that we its members will be."

"I hope we shall, David!"

"More and more," he went on gravely, "I see the imperative need for absolute consecration. It is the men and women who can say, 'This one thing I do,' who are going to bring in the kingdom of heaven."

"I heard a graduation address delivered on those words once," Elizabeth Bray replied. "I remember the speaker urged the young men and women who were listening to him to select some vocation in life, art, music, literature, business, and then to bring every faculty of mind and will—with the law of God thrown in—to bear on the situation in order to ensure success. He was very eloquent and very dramatic and the whole thing made a great impression on me. I spoke of it afterwards to a woman who was present, and who had gained that vision of Truth which had not come to me then, and she said, 'Yes, but when Paul said, *This one thing I do*, he added, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*' I never forgot that answer. It seemed, in a moment, to place everything I had heard in a different light and to hold up the 'one thing needful' before me in characters of gold."

"A great many people believe," David answered, "that work well done is all that is required of them—and of course work well done is better than work badly done—but if the Master's teaching meant anything it meant that the mainspring of all purpose and action must be love for God; a spiritual sense of at-one-ment with Him, the heart's sincere and spontaneous worship. How is it that so many good people do not seem to recognize the imperative demand of the 'first and great commandment'?"

"I think a great many people think the demand higher than they care to comply with."

"And so they miss the joy of joys," David replied.

As they walked on he asked—

"Just as much in love with your work as ever, I suppose?"

"Indeed I am! Mrs. Bennett is one of the kindest women I have ever met, and of course I have more to do with her than with the other ladies who are interested with her in the work, as it was she who started it. She gives a great deal of time and money to it; scarcely a day goes by that she does not come to see us, and she is constantly attending sales of children's

clothes and shoes. She has trunks full of such things at home, and when I need a fresh supply I have only to 'phone to her."

"It is fortunate for the neglected children of the world that there are some women like that," David replied.

"I think it is wonderful how this position came to me," Elizabeth went on. "I am so happy in it. I have always loved to work among children, and I am right in my element now."

The man at her side turned and looked at her with deep affection and admiration. When, some three years before, Elizabeth had begun to attend the church which they had just left, there were those who coupled her name with that of David Joyce, through whose ministration she had gained that understanding of God which illumined her whole life and released her from a bronchial trouble of many years standing. But those who knew David best knew that he would never marry, and Elizabeth's entirely impersonal manner soon made evident the nature of the regard in which she held him.

Neither of them had been unaware of the

little breeze of affectionate comment which had blown around them. They even discussed it with some amusement. This discussion had taken place as they walked home from church one Wednesday evening, and had been precipitated by the rather pointed remark of an elderly lady who evinced much interest in their affairs. David had paused under an electric light and, looking at Elizabeth with a twinkle in his blue eyes, declared, "Elizabeth, I shall never ask you to marry me. You're fully an inch taller than I am. Besides, you're too good-looking. I don't want to hear people saying, 'What on earth induced that handsome girl to marry that homely little man?'" To which she had replied, "David, I would not accept you if you did! Much as I admire you, I have a decided objection to 'auburn' hair!" After which exchange of compliments they had walked on, laughing like two happy children.

"I suppose you have all nationalities in the 'Home'?" David said now.

"Almost, although the Irish seem to predominate. And I am ashamed to say that we have two children of American parents. It is so interesting to study them and see how indi-

vidual they are. The different tastes and characteristics begin to be evident almost before a child can speak plainly. We have one little four-year-old Polish boy, Jacob Jacobski, whose one idea of bliss is to see two people play ‘cat’s cradle.’ He usually has a piece of string concealed about him somewhere, all ready for the game, and at every change of design he heaves an ecstatic sigh.”

“He’ll be designer some day,” David smiled. “Or perhaps he’ll go back to his father’s country and help to straighten out some of her problems—if there is anything left of the continent of Europe by that time!”

“America is certainly the fusing-pot of nationalities,” Elizabeth replied. “One only realizes that fully when they are in some such work as I am doing.”

“Bennett—Bennett—” David said, as if to himself, “they’re the big carpet people, aren’t they?”

“Yes.”

“I know now who they are. They go to St. Luke’s church, where Mr. Trent is rector. Have you ever met Richard Trent, by the way?”

"No."

"He's"—David paused a moment and then added—"he's one of the best! I can't tell you how I love and admire that man! He has everything I would like to have and haven't got, good looks, good breeding, good education, and yet he's not one bit of a snob."

"But you have the 'one thing needful,' David," Elizabeth replied.

"Do you know," he remarked, "that at one time, about eight years ago, I went through a season of great depression. I used to think, What am I fit for, with my meagre stature, my meagre education and my superfluity of 'auburn' hair—as you politely call it. And do you know what lifted me out of all that?"

"What?"

"That verse, 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' I thought, All right, then I'll be a doorkeeper, and, God helping me, I'll be a faithful one!"

Elizabeth's eyes grew moist as they turned to his plain, cheerful face, so beautiful in its entire selflessness.

"If there be first a willing mind, it is ac-

cepted according to that a man hath and not according to that a man hath not,’ ” she quoted.

“ And really,” David went on, “ that was the beginning of a far better education for me. I read an article soon after that entitled, ‘ Spiritual education true culture,’ and I have been able to prove to a great extent that it is so. I speak a whole lot better grammar than I did ten years ago,” he ended naïvely.

“ As some one has truly said, ‘ Information is what we get from books and education what we get from people,’ ” Elizabeth smiled.

“ I have proved that to be true also. I know what an education my acquaintance with Mr. Trent has been to me. I once said something to him, like what I have said to you about my lack of equipment, and he said, ‘ Joyce, there is just one thing that is of value in the world and that is the thought which self-forgettingly reflects God. And it does not matter whether the thinker is Marcus Aurelius on the throne of Rome, or the slave Epictetus; whether it is John Bunyan the tinker, or Abraham Lincoln the statesman, or Phillips Brooks the preacher. What *lives* is whatever of mercy and love and truth these men gave to humanity.’ ”

Elizabeth was listening with kindling eyes and parted lips.

“Did you read that article in the *Twentieth Century Review?*” David asked.

“Yes.”

“It was written by Richard Trent.”

“Really?”

He nodded, and they walked a little way in silence, each engrossed in their own thoughts.

“He isn’t going to have the easiest path in the world by any means,” David said then meditatively, while a very tender look grew in his eyes. “But he’ll never shrink from it on that account. He’s not that kind. I would to God there were thousands like him!”

Conversation turned to other matters until their ways parted and no further mention was made of the rector of St. Luke’s. But as Elizabeth entered the gateway of the “Children’s Friend” Home she found herself thinking that she liked—yes, she liked exceedingly what she had that night heard of Richard Trent.

CHAPTER VII

At midnight of that same Sunday, when most of the inhabitants of Morriston lay sleeping, when Hilda Bennett had, hours before, repeated the Collect for the day and other prayers suitable for evening devotions, and the Bennett home was dark and silent, a man sat, fully dressed, near one of the windows. He was looking out at the vague outline of trees and shrubs which rose like spectres in the darkness. Across his knees lay a mongrel dog, one of whose paws was carefully bandaged, and the man's hand rested on the dog's head with no ungentle touch.

There were times when no one realized more fully than did Bradford Bennett himself the havoc which unbridled passion and uncurbed self-will had made of his life. There were times when an overwhelming horror of the future came upon him, and at such times he realized the fearful loneliness of such as he.

He had recently read a novel, the scene of

which was laid in Egypt, and which dealt with the life of a woman who had broken every known law, who had lied and tricked and cheated in order to satisfy her lust for admiration. In the end she had walked out alone at night into the desert which she had always dreaded.

"That's it," he thought now, "that's the way with all of us who set law at defiance; in the end we walk out alone into the dark!"

He shuddered, and the dog on his knees whined and lifted his head. Bradford moved his hand along the animal's back once or twice, and comforted by the touch he lay down and fell asleep again.

Did he deserve the fate which seemed to be closing in upon him? That was the question to which Bradford Bennett tried to find an answer. For how much of his devil's temper, his uncontrolled passion was he responsible? He had been sufficiently interested in his own abnormal mentality to look up his mother's antecedents, and he had found that, while nominally of English parentage, her mother had been a Basque circus rider. An accident had stranded this woman in a small Lancashire

town and there, during her convalescence, she had met and married the collier who was Bradford's maternal grandfather. Eighteen months later she deserted her husband and child in order to resume her old life, and they never heard of her afterwards.

The little girl had grown up wonderfully handsome, but at heart an outlaw, intolerant of all restraint. When she was seventeen her father emigrated with her to America, to save her, as he thought, from imminent peril. There she obtained employment in the Bennetts' mill, where young James Bennett, not yet twenty-one, saw, fell in love with and married her. But the ex-collier never lived to see this, for he died during their first winter in the new land, and when three years later his daughter followed him, that chapter in the tragedy which seemed to result from an accident to a member of a third-rate circus, was closed.

Bradford was too young when his mother died to remember her, but he knew now how entirely unsuitable such a marriage as hers and his father's must have been. There were times when he himself felt utterly out of place

among these decorous, respectable people whom he called relatives; when the lawless blood of the Basque circus rider seemed to run riot in his veins. When such a mood was upon him restraint of any kind drove him wild, and the savage instinct to sweep aside whatever stood in his path or blocked his will was abetted by great physical strength. "A dangerous boy," had been the verdict at school and college. "A dangerous man," was the verdict of these later years. That he was a man infinitely to be pitied few people realized.

His love for his wife had been of the fierce, ephemeral type which quickly burns itself out. After her first experience of his uncontrolled outbursts of temper, in which he broke into fragments an ivory fan which he had just given her, she lived in fear of them, and this attitude of thought reacted upon and irritated him. In his step-mother's quiet, motherly disposition, however, he seemed to find a haven of refuge. Sometimes he would go and sit with her for an hour or more, without saying anything, as if her presence soothed him. To please her he had consented to go to a sanitarium a few months before, although he had little hope that

the treatment would benefit him. While there he had one day done an unexpected kindness for one of the attendants, and looking up had found the head physician regarding him curiously.

"My dear man," he remarked casually to the doctor afterwards, "if you're trying to get to the bottom of my mental make-up, let me tell you right now that you have a pretty hard nut to crack! I've been trying to do it for thirty-three years and haven't succeeded yet. Guess I'm a direct off-shoot of the tree of good and evil, if that's what they call it. At times I have very kindly impulses, wouldn't hurt a fly, in fact. At others I'd just as soon commit murder as not—a little sooner, perhaps. I've pretty nearly done it more than once. Some day I suppose I'll do it outright, and then 'twill be 'goodbye to the world goodbye' for 'little Willie.' "

"Of all the queer fellows we ever had in this place," the doctor said afterwards to his assistant, "that man Bennett is the queerest."

"A clear case of heredity," the other remarked equably as he rolled a cigarette.

That was a month ago. One evening Brad-

ford had returned home without any warning.

"I couldn't have kept my hands off that smug assistant another minute if I had remained there," he explained briefly to his mother.

The head of the sanitarium had notified Mrs. Bennett that he did not think Bradford should be entirely without an attendant, and a brawny Ulsterman, named McKane, was the result. Fortunately Bradford rather liked McKane. The man had a shrewd blue eye and a humorous twist to his mouth, and Bradford, during his good-humored spells, was by no means devoid of humor.

"You'll be all right here, McKane," he explained to the man the day he arrived, "if you don't try to stop me in anything I want to do. If you *do*—well, you'll probably never know what happened to you."

"All right, sir," McKane agreed, "an' if ye see that it's inclined to hinder ye in anny way I am, ye can give me warning in time."

Bradford gave a short laugh.

"You are certainly an adept in the art of circumlocution, like all the rest of your countrymen," he replied, but the incident had established a friendly footing between them.

The attendant slept in a small room off the one in which Bradford now sat. That he had not yet retired, but would greatly appreciate being able to do so, was evidenced by a subdued, "Haw-haw-hum!" whose accompanying yawn showed that McKane was struggling to keep awake. Bradford rose and carrying the dog to a couch laid him down, being careful not to jar the injured paw.

"All right, Mac," he called in a low voice. "You needn't stay up. I'm going to bed."

He walked to the window again, however, and stood for some minutes looking out. There was no moon and what little starlight there had been was now clouded over. He could no longer see the faint outline of trees and shrubs. It was as though a pall of gloom had settled over everything.

"Into the dark," he repeated, "good God . . . into the dark!"

And the fear on his white face was a piteous thing to see.

CHAPTER VIII

“ ‘Here we go round the mulberry bush—
The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush’—

No, Jacob, you must take Annie’s hand—
that’s it, now—

‘Here we go round the mulberry bush,
So early in the morning! ’ ”

Fifteen pairs of small feet circled “round the mulberry bush” on Mrs. Bennett’s lawn, fifteen eager little faces were lifted to Elizabeth’s as she directed the play, and fifteen children, who had already found that life may seem to be a very cruel thing, were, for the time being, radiantly happy.

“Miss Bray, I know a game!” Annie’s small hand was raised insistently when the mulberry bush had received its measure of attention, and her eager voice began to explain the fascinations of the new recreation. Elizabeth’s assistant, Mrs. Lundergrin, a capable-

looking Swedish woman, sat with one baby on her lap and another sprawling on the ground beside her, the latter being Jacob Jacobski's sister and always spoken of by him as "my baby." Mrs. Bennett, beaming with maternal goodwill, looked on with shining eyes.

Richard Trent paused for a moment to watch the scene as he came up the graveled path. Some of the children had made chaplets of the red maple leaves under Elizabeth's direction, and one of these crowned her brown hair. She had a cluster of them fastened also in the girdle of her tan-colored linen dress, and the effect was most harmonious and becoming. The wholesome joy of living which seemed to radiate from her might, Richard thought, have been the children's guarantee that life need not be cruel, that love could conquer and overcome.

Mrs. Bennett came to meet him and introduced him to Elizabeth. As she acknowledged the introduction there flashed through her mind what David had said, "He has everything that I would like to have and haven't got—good looks, good breeding, good education," and she understood now what he meant. Richard was

thinking of what he had heard Mrs. Bennett say, "There is something compellingly attractive about Elizabeth Bray."

It was with somewhat of an effort that he turned his eyes from her face—a face such as he had always instinctively known some woman besides his mother must possess. He was conscious of a sudden sense of gladness, as if some of the child-joy in the air had entered into him, and unconsciously he drew a deep breath of pleasure.

"Is there anything that yields greater return than kindness shown to a child?" he questioned with a smile, looking round with kindling eyes at the group of happy little faces.

"Any one who has worked among them must admit that," Elizabeth replied. "They are so appreciative, so ready to give and receive love."

Mrs. Bennett had turned aside to speak to Elizabeth's assistant, but neither of them noticed this fact.

"I was struck with that when I visited our city playgrounds yesterday," Richard went on. "At each I was escorted around by a cortege of children, who evidently took my interest in them as a matter of course, and were

eager to go through their exercises for my entertainment. Only I could not help wishing that every playground had a swimming-pool! As the Recreation Secretary truly said, a playground without a swimming-pool is regarded by the average boy as a 'frost.' I am sure I would have considered it so when I was thirteen or fourteen!"

"And I cannot help wishing, every time I visit the playgrounds, that they had just double the number of baby hammocks," Elizabeth answered. "As it is now the poor little mites have to take turns, and just as one is having a nice nap, or enjoying a good swing, it has to be taken out to make room for the next."

"That's too bad, and it must mean so much to the tired mothers to have them here. I saw a number sitting under the trees, while their children were being so well entertained and taken care of."

"And we have no comprehension of how hard those women work," Elizabeth said earnestly. "The sacrifices many of the foreign-born women make in order to have their children educated, are tremendous. I often think what a responsibility rests upon us as Ameri-

cans in the way we deal with these people. A vast number of them are just like children themselves. How are we going to teach them, and *what* are we going to teach them?"

Her eyes met Richard's gravely in her earnestness, and in a moment, as they looked at each other, one strong soul instinctively recognized the other. Such recognition always brings with it a sense of purest joy. Richard was conscious of a mental exhilaration such as he had rarely known before. It was the challenge of one courageous nature to another, and the response on his part was instantaneous. He opened his lips to answer her, but they closed with the words unspoken. Hilda had come out of the house and crossed the lawn toward them, and he left Elizabeth's side and went forward to meet her. He accounted to himself for the sense of disappointment he felt, by attributing it to the fact that he had not had time to speak to Elizabeth about David, who was their mutual friend.

It did not occur to him to pursue with Hilda the topic he had just been discussing with Elizabeth. Indeed, she knew nothing of his visit to the playgrounds. She was dressed all in

white, as the day was unusually warm for that season of the year, and, as was invariably the case, her gown gave an impression of extreme simplicity, but its cost would have solved the question of baby hammocks for more than one city playground.

A servant brought a perfectly appointed tea table, whose china and silver gleamed in the sunlight, placed it under a large elm tree and Hilda took her seat beside it. She was at her best when playing chatelaine, and her exquisitely kept hands, whose whiteness had never been marred by one menial task moved daintily among the cups and saucers.

"The day is really too warm for hot tea," she remarked. "Perhaps you would prefer a cool drink, Richard?"

"If it would not be too much trouble, I think I should," he replied.

"Miss Bray looks as though she might appreciate something cool," Hilda said with a faint smile. "She certainly is indefatigable in her efforts to entertain Mother's protégés."

Only a woman could have told how she managed to convey by an apparently laudatory remark an impression of *gaucherie* with regard

to Elizabeth, as only a woman could have done it. Richard turned and looked at Elizabeth. As a matter of fact the heat, which was merely the genial afterglow of Indian summer, did not seem to cause her the least discomfort. Her figure, although formed on gracious lines, was very supple, and gave the impression of being suspended from the shoulders rather than of being supported by the feet, as all well poised figures do. This lent to her movements lightness and grace. She was standing now with the children grouped closely about her as she directed their play, the wreath of red maple leaves, which she had entirely forgotten, still crowning her hair.

"An artist might consider Miss Bray, as she now stands, a fitting study for a figure of 'Mercy,'" Richard remarked.

The delicate cup in Hilda's hand clinked sharply against its saucer.

"Seeing these children has reminded me of something I have intended to speak to you about," she began. "I do not think the children in the Sunday school at St. Luke's are properly instructed with regard to the fasts and feasts of the Church."

His eyebrows raised themselves in a slight smile.

"Is there not time enough for that?"

"I don't think so. The earlier they learn the importance of such occasions the better. I have felt for some time, and father quite agrees with me, that this part of their instruction has been decidedly neglected."

It might have occurred to Richard to ask why she did not take a class in the Sunday school and help to set right what she considered to be wrong, but she was not the type of woman who succeeded with children, and perhaps he knew this.

"It seems to me," he suggested, "that the only thing children—especially little children—can understand is love. Miss Bray seems to have mastered that fact." Again his eyes turned to Elizabeth.

Hilda rose, hastily for her, for her movements as well as her voice suggested a rather studied repose. Her mother was coming toward them and they went to meet her.

"Well, Mother," she said languidly, "don't you think it is nearly time that your numerous family wended its way homeward?"

"Yes, I suppose so," Mrs. Bennett admitted reluctantly. "They have had such a beautiful day! It will be something for them to remember all their lives—poor little tots! It has done my heart good to watch them! Richard, will you see that the cars are brought round while I get the basket of souvenirs?"

The distribution of souvenirs took some time. When, at last, each little hand was safely clasping some cherished possession, a pink "Billikins" still remained in the basket. Mrs. Bennett glanced around in some apprehension.

"One of the children is missing, Miss Bray?" she said quickly.

Elizabeth looked over the group.

"Jacob Jacobski is not here," she corroborated.

"Where can he have gone? I hope he has not wandered out through any of the gates. I gave strict orders that they were to be kept closed."

Alarm grew in Mrs. Bennett's face and voice. Elizabeth laid one hand on her arm.

"Let us remember in Whose care the child is," she said gently.

"I saw a little fellow, a few minutes ago, going toward the back of the house," Richard said. "He held out a piece of string to me, but I could not quite make out what he wanted me to do with it."

"That was Jacob undoubtedly," Elizabeth said with a smile.

She started in the direction he had indicated, but Richard ran lightly ahead of her. Hilda turned to her mother.

"I think, Mother, that you see for yourself now how unwise it is to bring these children here," she said in a low, determined voice. "It is far too great a responsibility for you. If anything has happened to this child—"

"Do not suggest such a thing, Hilda!" Mrs. Bennett pleaded. She had not known until that moment how dear every little inmate of the "Children's Friend" Home had become to her.

"Well, anyway, it is unwise, and if it was Miss Bray's suggestion—"

"No, indeed, it was my own thought entirely," Mrs. Bennett said quickly.

At the back of the house the interlacing branches of two large elm trees formed a nat-

ural arbor. In the center of this a rockery had been built and planted with ferns, which were watered by a fountain. Near this rockery two men were now stooping, each resting on one knee, and over the hands of one a piece of twine was spread in intricate design. Both were regarding this with much concentration, while beside them a small boy, for whose benefit the whole thing was evidently being done, looked on with absorbed interest.

"Who are they?" Elizabeth asked in a low voice when she reached the place where Richard stood regarding the scene.

"Bradford Bennett and his attendant."

"Attendant?"

"He is supposed . . . not to be well."

Elizabeth's eyes went back to the group in the arbor.

"That isn't the way, sir," McKane was saying emphatically, "ye cross yer hands first, now ye take hold of them ends there with yer little fingers—that's it! Now draw 'em back—that's the way—an' up in the middle. You've got it!"

Jacob fairly quivered with delight when the new design was presented to him. Never had

he had such an orgy of cat's cradling as this!

"H'm—" McKane stroked his chin meditatively—"now I wonder what ye do next?"

"You take hold of those places at the sides—" it was Bradford Bennett who gave directions now, motioning with his head as his hands were out of commission for purposes of gesticulation—"no, not that way, with your forefinger and thumb—that's right. Now draw them out and up in the center—that's the way!"

The changed pattern was again exhibited to Jacob, who sighed ecstatically. Elizabeth raised her eyes to Richard Trent's face—wet eyes, through which he seemed to look down into the strong, sweet, compassionate depths of a woman's heart.

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these," she quoted softly. "Mr. Trent," she added, "will you bring Jacob in a few minutes? I will go back and tell Mrs. Bennett that he is all right."

CHAPTER IX

Richard made more than one trip to Wayville before he succeeded in finding John Barnes. He was told that the latter had moved from the cottage house which he had occupied with his wife, to a small tenement. There he found that Barnes had moved again, only a few days before, because he could not pay the rent. This information was given him by a woman who lived in the tenement below. She was a stout, neat looking young woman, and stood in the doorway of her home while she talked with Richard, one small child in her arms and another peeping at the visitor from behind her skirts.

"Those children ought to be taken away from John Barnes," she said emphatically.

"Why?" Richard asked.

"Because they ain't gettin' enough to eat an' they don't have no kind of care. The fatherer's drinkin' about all he earns an' he don't work more'n a couple o' days a week anyhow.

My little Frankie, here, come home cryin' one day, just before they left, because young Johnny Barnes knocked him down an' took the piece of bread an' butter I just give him away from him. I went out to settle young Johnny, but when I see the way that kid was eatin' that bread I hadn't the heart! The little girl, she was sittin' in the gutter whimperin'—she's a whimpery young one anyhow—an' sayin' she was hungry, too, but Johnny kep' one eye on her, an' I think if she or anyone else had tried to take that bread from him he'd have scratched their eyes out, he was that starvin'. I brought 'em in an' filled 'em up for once, poor kids! I used to know Mary Barnes, their mother. She an' I was both raised in Morriston, an' a better girl never drew breath. I was always sorry she marri'd John Barnes. He's the kind of man that needs another hand besides his own to keep him straight."

"Where is the baby?" Richard asked.

"She's with a cousin of the mother's on a farm about three miles from here. But she, poor woman, hasn't the best of health an' has kids of her own, so I don't imagine the baby's havin' any extra care."

Richard thanked her and went his way, heavy at heart. He found John Barnes, after some more searching, in two rooms on a street which in a city would have been regarded as a slum district. That Bishop Carrington's prediction had already come true Richard saw at a glance, for Barnes was partly intoxicated, although it was not yet seven o'clock in the evening.

He greeted Richard effusively, pump-handling his hand up and down in the loose, purposeless manner peculiar to men in his condition. He told him again and again that he appreciated his call. Richard inquired about the children and found that the boy and girl were sleeping in an adjoining room. He went in to look at them, and it did not require an expert in such matters to see that they were ill-nourished and ill-cared for. The little girl's hair lay in a tangled, uncombed mat upon the pillow. The boy was not even undressed, and his face, hands and feet showed the soil of the street, a sight to make a mother's heart ache.

"I'm goin' to do what's right by them kids, don't you make no mistake about that," Barnes said thickly, swaying as he spoke.

"You'll never do it, Barnes, unless you cut out the saloon," Richard said with conviction.

The man gave him a blinking, reproachful look, as though wondering at his lack of comprehension.

"Oh, I may take a drink now and then," he said, with an aimless wave of the hand, as if dismissing a matter of little importance, "but I'll do what's right by them kids, just the same. An' I'll bring 'em up—I'll bring 'em up—" he made a dash at the word, "Episcopalians," floundered, and let it go with another aimless wave of the hand. "I like that Bishop of yours, he told me you'd come an' see me. He's a gen'leman, that's what he is—yes, sir, a gen'leman—he—"

Richard turned to go. There was nothing to be gained by talking to Barnes in his present condition. The latter pressed him to come again and the clergyman had the uncomfortable conviction that only his clerical garb saved him from being offered a drink.

The children could undoubtedly be removed to the "Children's Friend" Home at Morris-ton, temporarily at least, and it warmed his heart to think how different they would look

when Elizabeth and her efficient assistant had had them in charge for a while. Indeed, if this were not done the state would probably step in and take them away from the father. It was not at all likely that he would make any very serious objection, for all his drunken boasting. But that father himself, what could be done for him and for the hundreds of thousands like him? Richard groaned in spirit. He was beginning to have an almost morbid sense of failure. "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground," were words which constantly recurred to him.

He had recently read an article which gave part of a letter from a Presbyterian missionary in Japan. While returning from a visit to the leper colony, the missionary said, his native assistant had said to him, "Sensei, there is some remedy, and the healing of the lepers by Christ is his call to us to find it."

"I can understand," the missionary went on, "how the great Christ just had to put out his hand in healing touch. If he realized that all power was given unto him, what a well-spring of joy he must have had in his own spirit! I think the saddest feeling possible is to be unable

to help when in the presence of suffering. But I do believe that there are great forces in the spiritual world, which would yield as marvelous results there as electricity is doing in the material world. And yet we are old fogies—doubting Thomases—and we do not reach out and possess and make use of these wonderful powers. We are all like men groping with only a candle light, when all the undiscovered blaze of electric light could have been theirs for the seeking. I wonder if we are not failing—all of us—right here. We are only dimly realizing the meaning of ‘all power is given unto me.’”

Richard had thought much about that letter—the letter of a man who had consecratedly given his life to the Master’s service, and who, in that service, had come into closest contact with sin and disease, with every form of human woe, in fact. And after years of faithful work he was compelled to say, “I think the saddest feeling possible is to be unable to help when in the presence of suffering.” Over and over again those words, “unable to help,” repeated themselves in Richard’s thoughts. They were the burden of the deep depression

that sometimes weighed upon him. If a man such as this missionary was compelled to admit the inadequacy of the Christian religion as he understood and preached it, what hope was there that men of less devotion, less consecrated lives, could prove it to be of vital power?

“We are truly like men groping with only a candle light,” he thought as he entered the rectory of St Luke’s. But there was one thing for which he might have felt thankful—that both he and the man who had written that letter were dissatisfied with what they had, and had begun to grope for clearer light and fuller vision.

CHAPTER X

Richard received a telephone message on the following morning from the rector of St. John's Church inviting him to dine with him that evening. As this was in order to arrange about an exchange of pulpits, which they had already discussed, he immediately telephoned his acceptance.

St. John's, which was a smaller church than St. Luke's, was situated in the most fashionable part of Morriston and numbered among its communicants many of the city's "four hundred." Its rector, the Reverend Vincent Chalmers, had completed his education at Oxford University, and had brought back with him to America more than a hint of Anglicanism. In fact, he "out Cæsared Cæsar" in his use of the broad "a," as people are apt to do to whom such pronunciation does not come naturally. His pronunciation of such words as "dear" and "cheer," of which he invariably made two syllables, with an almost ludicrous dropping of

the jaw on the last, was a strain on the gravity of certain of his choir boys whose sense of humour was pretty well developed. He intoned most of the service and wore elaborately embroidered stoles whenever occasion permitted.

There was a reredos at St. John's, the gift of a wealthy parishioner, whose wonderful carving few Episcopalians who came to Morriston failed to see, and no one could deny that when the rector stood in the chancel, clad in his canonicals, with the rich blue of the Oxford hood, and flanked by the dark wood of the reredos, he made an unusually imposing figure. He was some three years older than Richard Trent and, like him, unmarried.

"No use to offer you a cigar, I suppose," he said as they rose from the table on the following evening. "I believe you don't smoke."

He lighted one for himself, however, and puffed on it for a while with apparent satisfaction. After a few minutes he strolled to a stand, which was littered with papers and magazines, and selecting the number of the *Twentieth Century Review* which contained Richard's article on Christian healing, handed it to him.

"Have you read that?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"What do *you* think of it?" Richard parried, with a slight smile.

"I think it would have been a very fortunate thing if the 'clergyman' who wrote it had selected some other profession besides the ministry."

"That may be true."

"The man is away off," Vincent Chalmers said, with a decisive wave of the hand which held his cigar.

"In what way?"

"Why, if the power of Christian healing is ever restored it will be restored to the Church."

"By which you mean the Episcopal church?"

"Assuredly. To her were committed the oracles of God."

"That," Richard remarked with a smile, "is what our inimitable friend, *Jamie Soutar*, would have called 'verra comfortin' for the few.' History has proved, however, that the oracles of God have been committed, in every age, not to an organization, but to those individuals who were sufficiently spiritual to re-

ceive them, regardless of class or creed. It may interest you to know," he added, "that it was I who wrote that article."

The ash of Vincent Chalmers cigar dropped unheeded on the black cloth of his clerical coat while he stared at his guest.

"Does the Bishop know?" he asked in an awed voice.

"Yes."

It would not be quite just to say that the rector of St. John's was conscious of a thrill of exultation, but certainly the feeling which he did experience was far from unpleasurable. Bishop Carrington's affection for Richard Trent, and his undisguised preference for the form of service used at St. Luke's, had always rankled in his consciousness. Now, perhaps, the Bishop would see the dangerous by-ways into which such laxity led!

"Well, at least you have had the satisfaction of airing your views—albeit anonymously," he observed.

"That article was written and sent to that magazine nearly a year ago. If it were to be done again I should not sign it anonymously."

His companion looked at him in speechless

amazement. He had never understood Richard Trent and he understood him less than ever now. He considered it a great pity that such men as he should get into the "Church." They always stirred up trouble and created disruption.

"For myself," he remarked, "I have never believed in ultra radical measures along any lines. They simply defeat their own ends. Let well enough alone, is my motto." He looked regretfully at the end of his cigar. "Why isn't a cigar just half as long again, I wonder?" he questioned philosophically.

As Richard gazed at him he was conscious for an instant, not longer, of something not unlike a throb of envy. The other man's complacence with himself, his church and the world at large was such a colossal thing! Then all the leaping life and aspiration in him cried, No! Never to drift with the tide of materiality! To swim—to swim—even if he could do no more than barely hold his own. Only not to sink into this inertia, this false sense of contentment! He stood up, and something in his face and figure compelled and held the other man's eyes.

"Chalmers," he said slowly, "the day of hiding behind tradition, or of clinging to what has proved inadequate in dealing with the world's woe, has gone by—for me, at any rate. I agree with Bernard Shaw when he says: 'If your religion of today fails you, get another tomorrow.' That may seem to be rather a brutal way of putting it, but the truth is there. If the way we, through tradition or habit, have presented the religion of Jesus Christ has been inefficient to lift men and women out of sin and suffering—and if we are honest with ourselves we must admit that it has—then, in the name of common mercy, let us find a better one; or, at least, let us look for it! Only do not let us, who call ourselves ministers of Christ, sit back, smugly content with our lot in life, while men are being driven by lust, while women are being sold into slavery and while little children are stretching out their hands to us for help!"

When he had gone Vincent Chalmers glanced down uncertainly at his well-groomed person. He almost felt as if he had been rudely shaken. He began to have serious doubts as to the advisability of allowing Richard Trent to occupy the pulpit at St. John's.

It would never do to let such heresy as this creep into *his* church!

"I'll telephone tomorrow and ask him to preach on diocesan missions," he thought consolingly, "that will be perfectly safe."

CHAPTER XI

Mrs. Bennett and McKane had occasional conferences in the latter's rooms with regard to Bradford's condition, and it was during one of these that the attendant told her of the little incident in the arbor. He pictured the scene so vividly that tears came into his listener's eyes, while inwardly she repeated the Bishop's words, "Poor, poor fellow!"

"'Twas like a different man he was all that day and the next," McKane went on, "and he kept talking about the little fella, saying what a bright little chap he was, for all his outlandish name. And then he'd fall to thinking, and I knew it was about his own little girl. There wouldn't be anny chance at all, I suppose, Ma'am, of getting her here for a while?"

Mrs. Bennett shook her head.

"I'm afraid not," she said regretfully. "My daughter-in-law would not hear of the child's coming, I feel sure. Mrs. Bradford

Bennett's fear of her husband grew to be almost a disease with her. She was a nervous wreck when she left him."

"Was the child afraid of him?"

"Oh, no! Jean was devoted to her father, who humoured her every whim. But then she had never seen him—" she paused significantly, and McKane nodded.

"If the child isn't afraid of him 'tis a sight of good 'twould do him to have her here for a while," he said with conviction. "Ye might write to herself about it annyhow."

"Well," Mrs. Bennett said meditatively, "I suppose it could do no harm, although I have little hope that it will do any good. I may say frankly, McKane, that I have come to have great faith in your good judgment."

"Thank ye, Ma'am!"

Mrs. Bennett wrote to her daughter-in-law that evening, and within a few days received a letter which greatly surprised her. Not alone did Lillian consent to let Jean come to them, but the whole tone of her communication was different to the Lillian she remembered. The letter was signed "your affectionate daughter," and a lump rose in the elder woman's throat as

she read it, for no expression of love ever found her unresponsive.

She sent for McKane immediately and communicated the good news to him.

"We must tell Mr. Bradford at once," she said eagerly.

McKane shook his head.

"That isn't the way to do it, Ma'am—if you'll excuse me," he asserted. "I'll bring it round and get him talking about the little girl, and then maybe he'll suggest it himself."

McKane's diplomacy worked so well that the very next day Bradford did suggest it himself. Before the end of the week Mrs. Bennett and Hilda left for New York, the former to return immediately with her grandchild, the latter to remain for a week as the guest of a friend.

There was little opportunity during the short time that she remained in the metropolis for Mrs. Bennett to see much of her daughter-in-law, but she was struck from the moment they met by a change in her. This was not the nervous woman, almost on the verge of collapse, who had left them ten months before. It was very evident that Lillian had not alone

gained better health, but a poise and assurance that was wholly lacking in the high-strung girl whom Bradford Bennett had married. That the parting with her child, even for so short a time, was a wrench the grandmother saw. At the last Lillian held Jean close to her and the older woman thought she heard the words, "Remember, darling!" When she raised her head her eyes were wet, but the expression of her face was calm, almost exalted.

Mrs. Bennett telephoned to Elizabeth directly she arrived home.

"I can't wait to have you meet my darling," she said eagerly. "Won't you come up this afternoon?" and Elizabeth gladly assented.

It was almost five o'clock, however, before she was free. The extension of the Home was nearly completed, and consultations with the workmen took a good deal of her time. Indeed, Mrs. Lundergrin had remonstrated with her for staying so much in the house of late, and urged her now not to hurry home.

She saw when she entered the library that Mrs. Bennett was not alone. Richard Trent and Bradford Bennett were there, while seated on the floor beside the latter was the most beau-

tiful little child Elizabeth had ever seen. Her hair, which was very fair and sunny, was tied back over one temple with a large bow of delicately tinted pink ribbon, and fell over her neck and ears in a profusion of natural curls. The lashes which shaded her eyes were very dark. The rounded bare arms were softly dimpled. From a picture-book, which lay open before her on the floor, she was "making-believe" to read aloud to an audience which consisted of a *Teddy-bear*, a doll and "*Plant*," which was the name that Bradford Bennett had given to his dog. The latter, who now evidently regarded himself as a cleanly and thoroughly respectable member of society, was sitting as close to the child as he could possibly get. Now and then he lifted one paw and placed it either on the open page or on her lap, in the way that dogs have when they want to attract attention to themselves and be "*in*" whatever is going on.

Elizabeth acknowledged Mrs. Bennett's introduction to her son and shook hands with Richard. She understood children too well to make any effusive show of admiration or affection when Mrs. Bennett said, with loving pride,

"Miss Bray, this is our little girl, Jean," but her hand touched the fair head gently for a moment and the child's deep blue eyes were lifted to her face.

It was the first time in many months that Bradford had mingled with the family of his own accord, and his mother was consequently radiant, seeing in this a most hopeful sign. Truth to tell, the fact that he did so now was due as much to his sister's absence as to his child's presence. Indeed, it was as though a ban had been lifted from the entire household. Mrs. Bennett would never have admitted it to herself, but even she was conscious of an exhilarating sense of freedom.

"I allowed Jean to remain up until you came," she said to Elizabeth, when they had chatted for a moment, "but now I think it is high time that Dolly and Teddy and Bunny were all put to bed," and she lifted the child to her feet.

Elizabeth assisted in collecting the numerous family—"Plant" looking on meanwhile rather dejectedly—and was about to go when Mrs. Bennett said—

"If you are not in a hurry, Elizabeth, I

should like to see you for a few minutes when I come downstairs. Mr. Trent thinks something ought to be done about the Barnes children immediately."

She sat down again and Richard told her of the plans for removing the Barnes children to Morriston, relating something of his experience with the father. Bradford sat stroking "Plant's" ears, who in his desertion had gone to his master for comfort.

Presently sounds of childish distress reached them from upstairs—Jean's wail of protest, accompanied by older voices in attempted coercion and consolation. That the latter did not prevail was made evident by the soft thud, thud of small feet on the stairs, together with a stream of incoherent baby talk. Jean's figure, clad in a white nightgown, over which her grandmother had hastily slipped a diminutive pink flannel kimono, appeared in the doorway, her eyes starry through unshed tears.

"G'an'ma won't let Jean say her *noo* prayer," she announced, in the sweet little croak of distressed childhood.

She stumbled toward her father, as being the only one present to whom she could appeal,

and he lifted her on to his knee. His face as he did so might have been a study for a psychologist, so many different emotions struggled in it.

"I don't *say* 'Now-I-lay-me' any more," she asserted, looking up into his face. Like all small children she usually italicized at least one word in every sentence when very much in earnest.

"You don't?" he questioned, in feigned surprise, "I thought all good little girls said 'Now-I-lay-me' before they went to bed."

"N-no—" she shook her head until the starry eyes were only visible through a tangle of swinging curls—"they say, 'Father-Mother, God.' "

Elizabeth rose and took an involuntary step toward the child. The sudden flood of tenderness which welled up within her sent the tears to her eyes. She stood, resting one hand on the library table, looking at the lifted baby face, so exquisite in its innocent beauty. Bradford was gazing at his small daughter in some uncertainty.

"Well," he said at last, "let's have the 'noo' prayer."

Jean slipped to her feet and wedged herself in between his knees. Resting her forehead against his chest she began—

* “ ‘Father, Mother, God,
Loving me,’ ”

“ ‘Guard me—’ ” prompted Elizabeth.

“ ‘Guard me while I sleep,’ ”

“ ‘Guide—’ ”

“ ‘Guide my little feet,’ ”

“ ‘Up to—’ ”

“ ‘Up to Thee.’ ”

When it was finished she raised her head and looked up at her father.

“Daddy read about angels over Jean?” she suggested, and trotted away.

Her grandmother, who had come downstairs with her, now followed in tender solicitude. When the child returned she was holding a large illuminated card between both hands. As before she started toward her father, but half-way across the room paused, for some un-

* “Miscellaneous Writings” by Mary Baker Eddy.

explainable childish reason, and held the card out to Elizabeth.

"Mamma holds Jean when she reads it," she suggested.

Bradford Bennett started, his brows drawing together in incredulous inquiry, for the picture which the child's words called up was not among those which memory furnished him. His wife had been in too nervous a condition since Jean's birth to take any care of her. Moreover, she was not at all a religious woman. Any training Jean had had in that way had come from her grandmother. Lillian attended St. Luke's occasionally, but frankly admitted that she did so merely because it was not "good form" not to go at all. He had once heard her tell a friend that she could sit through the service with just as rapt an expression as Hilda's and plan her next dancing frock at the same time. He had never known her to say a prayer or teach her child one. He judged, now, from Jean's reference to "angels" that this card must be of a religious nature. It was therefore no wonder that her words came to him with something of a shock.

Elizabeth saw that the card was an illumina-

tion of the ninety-first psalm. She lifted the child to her lap, and with the fair head lying against her breast began to repeat softly—

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flyeth by day.

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation.

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Long before the psalm was ended the card had slipped from Jean's hands to the floor, for she was asleep. Mrs. Bennett had wiped her eyes more than once during the reading, for though she was quite familiar with the words, their sweet message of protection and comfort appealed to her now as never before. She found her whole being relaxing in a sense of the

Father's love and care which made her feel as if a mighty hand had been laid on her life, drawing its sorrows and perplexities into one great harmony, security, peace. She began to have a glimpse of what the Master meant when he said, "The kingdom of God is within you."

Bradford had sat leaning slightly forward, his hands hanging loosely between his knees, and God alone knew what first faint groping after the Infinite began to stir in that darkened consciousness. Richard had looked once at Elizabeth, but he knew that while memory lasted he would keep that picture of the girl with the child lying within her arms, and hear the low voice thrilling with absolute assurance.

When Elizabeth arose and carried the sleeping child upstairs Mrs. Bennett followed. Bradford also left the room, stumbling slightly as he walked, as though he did not see very clearly. Richard stooped, and picking up the card from the floor stood for a few minutes with it in his hand, then he turned and went out.

As he walked home he said to himself—
"I have been near to the gate of heaven!"

CHAPTER XII

That the tragedy which he had heard of as happening to other men had happened to him was something that forced itself slowly upon Richard Trent. For weeks he fought against the conviction, trying with all his might to put the dark fact from him. There came a day, however, when he found himself face to face with the certainty that he stood pledged in honor to marry a woman whom he did not love, whom he now knew he had never loved, and whose life he could never share, as she could never share his.

The situation was sufficiently appalling to give any man pause. And honesty compelled Richard to admit that for him the tragedy did not end there; that in Elizabeth Bray he instinctively recognized a soul so sweet and strong and pure that the very thought of her gladdened his heart.

He was one of the men of whom Tennyson's lines were blessedly true—

"Trust in womankind and faith in all things high
Beats in his blood."

There were times when he felt that this thing was inevitable, that with Elizabeth and himself it was "deep calling unto deep," and that he was powerless to prevent either the call or the answer.

Of course he had his "bad half hour," but he told himself again and again that he was glad, would always be glad, he had met Elizabeth and that his ideal of womanhood had been realized. It was somewhat discouraging after this—when he thought that he had emerged triumphant from his struggle—to find himself laying plans the only motive behind which was the desire to see her. To his credit be it said that when he discovered this he abandoned them. But he sometimes wondered if life were to be a series of such self-denials. He felt devoutly thankful that Hilda was still away. This would give him time to get himself well in hand, and she need never know. But there were moments when he turned cold as he contemplated their future together.

He threw himself into his work with desperate energy and tried to stimulate flagging

interest in the "Brotherhood of St. Andrews" by inviting the men who composed this society to spend a social evening at the rectory. The entertainment on this occasion was entirely informal, but Richard hired the best male quartette in the city to sing some comic selections and to lead the men in college songs. One of the "brotherhood," who was clever at sleight of hand tricks, entertained them with his skill. Before they left they all filed out into the dining-room, where Richard's housekeeper had lavishly heaped the table with good things in the way of sandwiches and cake, and where Mrs. Bennett and the wife of the junior church-warden dispensed hot coffee and chocolate.

The evening was unanimously pronounced a great success, and Richard really felt that some good had been accomplished. Before the week was out, however, he called on the mother of one of the "brotherhood," a Mrs. Kemp, and found himself unwittingly plunged into the midst of one of those scenes of tragedy and gloom which seem, for the time being, to blot all sunshine out of life. Mrs. Kemp was a widow, and her only son, a lad of nineteen, had been convicted of dishonesty by his employer

that very morning. Out of consideration for the mother the man had refused to prosecute, but the heart-breaking fact of the boy's dishonesty remained.

He was one of those whom Richard had entertained at the rectory a few evenings before. The latter recalled now how boisterously, almost hysterically, he had laughed at the jokes and sleight of hand tricks. Once Richard, glancing at him, had thought that he looked feverish. Indeed, it was a latent fear with regard to him that had brought him to call on the mother.

What was wrong with himself, he wondered, as he walked home, that the lad had not come to him before he left that night and told him all? Was it fear of condemnation? Had the jokes and the comic songs and the general air of hilarity actually operated against such a confession, and made the boy feel as if he were outside the pale?

He recalled an incident which had come under his notice, of a young man who had gone to David Joyce for advice and help. He had been gambling and had got into debt and was afraid to tell his father. But he poured out

his tale of wrong-doing unreservedly to David. Why? Because he instinctively recognized in this plain, quiet man the compassionate spirit of the Christ, which says, "Go, and sin no more." That Richard knew.

Had one of these men who had spent that social evening at the rectory gone away with his problem any nearer its solution? Had one of them gained thereby a greater hold on integrity and truth? Such occasions were very pleasant, and perhaps helpful to a certain extent, but what lasting good did they accomplish? He recalled what the enthusiastic wife of the junior church-warden had said when the evening was over, about providing suitable entertainment for the young people in order to stimulate interest and fill empty pews. But it was the lives of men and women rather than church pews that Richard Trent wanted to see filled. The barren existence of the average working man and woman sometimes appalled him. It was work, eat, sleep—sleep, eat, work, and nothing else save a modicum of questionable entertainment; no real joy, no inspiration, no sense of freedom, no achievement, nothing—

beyond the satisfying of a few individual desires.

"If there is a God of love and mercy, there must be a way out—there must be a remedy," he thought now. "Is it *that* way—David Joyce's way . . . and hers?"

CHAPTER XIII

A few days after Jean had said her new prayer for the first time in her grandmother's home Elizabeth was surprised by receiving a call from McKane.

"Mr. Bennett—that is, Mr. Bradford—asked me to come, Ma'am," he explained. "He says ye seemed to know that little prayer the little girl tries to say now every evening."

"Yes, indeed I do," Elizabeth agreed, smiling.

"Well, 'tisn't well enough she knows it yet to be able to say it alone, and Mr. Bradford thought if you'd write it out for him he could help her with it."

"I will gladly do so—or, better still, I will lend Mr. Bennett the book in which it is."

"Thank ye kindly, Ma'am!" And McKane walked away with the volume under his arm.

When he had gone Elizabeth considered once more a question to which she had already given some thought. Should she, or should

she not, write to Lillian Bennett? If what she surmised was true, and Jean's mother had really found the Truth which makes men free, she felt that the little incident about the child and her new prayer would mean a great deal to her. It must have taken faith and courage on her part to let the child come at all, and to learn from one, who like herself had touched the seamless garment of the Christ, how God was taking care of and using the little one, would dispel any lurking anxiety.

She sat down to her desk and wrote immediately, and Lillian's answer reached her in the shortest possible time.

"My dear Miss Bray"—it ran—

"It would be utterly impossible for me to express on paper what I felt when I read your letter! If you knew all that had gone before—the old fear, which in spite of all I could do laid hold of me again when I read Mother Bennett's letter asking me to let Jean go to them, the hundred-and-one suggestions of evil which had to be met and mastered, you would better understand what it meant to me. When I think that in the very environment which I

dreaded for my baby, one of God's children should be waiting to help and shield her, I am filled with awe and gratitude. Oh, why do we ever doubt His wisdom and love?

"I have only known the power of Truth for a few months, but I can truly say, in the words of the psalm, that it has brought me up out of a 'horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.' It found me when life for me had become almost unendurable. I have often wondered, in the last few months, what I ever did to deserve this blessing—that such peace and joy should come to me—but I am beginning to see that Infinite Love knows nothing of human unworthiness, that 'he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.'

"I shall eagerly look for another letter from you.

"Yours in truth and love—

"Lillian Hayes Bennett."

Elizabeth answered this letter immediately, telling Lillian of McKane's call on her and its result.

"I feel sure that God is guiding and direct-

ing you in all this," she wrote. "More and more in my own experiences I recognize the need of orderly unfoldment in all our affairs. If we would only be willing to wait upon the Lord, as you have done, and let divine law establish harmonious conditions for us, there would not be so many disappointments. 'He knows the way he taketh and I will walk with him.' But, too often in our impatience we repeat the mistake of the man who tried to hasten the blooming of his rose by forcing open the bud, and so blighted the blossoming."

In answer Lillian said that many times of late she had been on the point of writing to her husband and offering to come back to him. "But," she added, "I knew I must wait until the old fear was entirely destroyed, and now, as you say, I feel so sure that God is leading me and that I can safely leave it all to Him."

Elizabeth had not much time for correspondence during the weeks that followed. The extension of the Home was completed and Mrs. Bennett was planning for a "Gift Day," when the building would be open to visitors, and when everyone at all interested in the work was expected to bring or send a gift of some

kind. The Barnes children were now in the Home, Mrs. Lundergrin having safely transferred all three of them from Wayville to Morriston, and the improvement which Richard had foreseen was already manifest in their appearance. Indeed, the elder little girl had cheered up so wonderfully in her new surroundings, and under Elizabeth's influence, that Mrs. Bennett regarded her with pardonable pride.

"They all need cuddling at that age," she said to Mrs. Lundergrin, who quite agreed with her, "and if they don't have it they pine and droop, like flowers that lack the sunshine."

To Richard she gave a special invitation to be present at the formal opening of the extension. In fact she offered to change the date if the one agreed upon did not suit him. Hilda was still in New York, but she sent a check for the benefit of the work. In the letter which accompanied this she suggested to her mother that those inmates of the "Children's Friend" who had not received the rite of infant baptism should, if possible, be baptised in the "Church," and urged that this should be attended to immediately. Mrs. Bennett set her lips, rather determinedly for her, when she

read it. "We are not in this work for the purpose of proselytizing," she thought, "and I shall never give anybody the least excuse to say that we are."

When Richard entered the large, new playroom, on the occasion of the gift day, the first person he caught sight of was David Joyce, who was standing talking with Elizabeth. Mrs. Bennett and the women who were interested with her in the Home were holding an informal reception at the other end of the room. When he had paid his respects to them he joined Elizabeth and David, and the sense of gladness he experienced in doing so was an infinite relief after the tension of the past few weeks.

"I was just showing Mr. Joyce our gift from Mr. Bradford Bennett, in addition to a most generous check," Elizabeth remarked, laying her hand on a large rocking horse, whose saddle and bridle of yellow leather might have delighted the heart of any small boy.

"How thoughtful of him!" Richard exclaimed.

"Yes, and hanging from the horse's mouth was a ball of bright-colored string, with a slip

of paper fastened to it on which was written, ‘For Jacob.’ Of course Jacob thinks the horse was for him, too, and calls it, ‘my horse.’ But he is the soul of generosity and is only too glad to share it with the other children.”

“We might all learn something from Jacob,” David remarked.

“And McKane sent us some wooden ducks that he had carved himself,” Elizabeth went on, “a mother duck and five little ones. And they are so cleverly weighted that they sail beautifully, bolt upright in the water. Such things are a boon to us on stormy days when the children cannot play out of doors.”

“Good for McKane!” Richard exclaimed. He himself felt like a boy who had escaped from school and was enjoying a brief season of play. This pleasant chat with David and Elizabeth made everything seem brighter.

“Oh, McKane is a joy!” Elizabeth smiled. “He is like a breeze from his own native shores. Only I never can keep my face quite straight when he twists his sentences in that funny way.”

David had turned aside to lift John Barnes junior on to the rocking horse, where he immediately gripped the horse’s sides with his knees,

gathered up the yellow reins and galloped for parts unknown at an alarming rate of speed. Elizabeth turned to Richard.

"Your gift is very beautiful," she said in a low voice, "and, strange to say, it is the only picture we received, so I am selfishly glad that Mrs. Bennett wanted it hung in the office, which is also my little sitting-room."

"It is already hung then?"

"Yes, and I think the light is very good."

"May I see it?"

"Certainly."

She led the way to the office, where Richard's gift of Plockhorst's "Good Shepherd" hung over the mantelpiece. There was no one in the room when they entered and they stood for some minutes in silence, looking up at the picture.

"It has meant much to me already," she said softly.

He did not answer; he felt that at that moment his voice would have betrayed him.

"Do you know our 'Shepherd Hymn'?" she asked.

"Yes. The first two lines have been part of my daily prayer for months."

She remembered what David had said, "He isn't going to have the easiest path in the world, by any means, but he'll never shrink from it on that account. He's not that kind."

"Whenever the way seems 'rugged,' or the 'hillside steep' to me," she went on, "I find it a great comfort and inspiration to remember that the Shepherd never requires us to take one step which he has not already taken. As some one has beautifully put it, 'He calls but never drives.' . . . 'and the sheep follow him for they know his voice,'" she ended, repeating the words under the picture.

"If we could only always distinguish the voice," Richard answered, "if we could tell with certainty the direction from which it comes. But, amid the confusion of human voices and the clamor of human desire, it sometimes appears to call now from one direction and then from another."

"We can always listen," she replied, "and if we do so, sooner or later we shall understand the tender Shepherd's call, and so make no mistake in choosing our path."

They had not looked at each other but at the picture while they talked. Richard's eyes fell

now on her upturned face, so full of love and faith and consecration, and he trembled with the intensity of the feeling that swept him.

To turn his back on this? It was little short of sacrilege! It was monstrous—inhuman! It was like deliberately turning away from the sunlight and walking into the dark! Words rushed to his lips, which in another moment he could not have held back. Very slowly Elizabeth's eyes left the picture and met his. Did she *know*? It almost seemed as though she must, so steadfast and courageous was that look. At that moment she was far stronger than he.

"We can always listen," she repeated.

But Elizabeth was not to escape her own testing time. It came upon her that night when she sat alone in the little room where the picture of the Good Shepherd hung. Richard's face, with its tragic appeal, as he had looked at her when she turned and met his eyes that afternoon, rose before her, and she bowed her face in her hands. The human desire to help him almost overwhelmed her.

"He does not need me . . . he does not need me," she repeated, pressing her fingers to her

eyes. "Father, he has Thy love, Thy care, Thy guidance . . . he does not need mine."

Some lines by a favorite writer, which she had read years before, came back to her with a deep sense of comfort—"When we find ourselves unable to do a hundredth part of what we would like to do for those we love, how glad we are that we may and *can* pray."

If Elizabeth Bray could not have prayed for Richard Trent that night she felt as though her heart must have broken.

CHAPTER XIV

The mental strain which Richard was undergoing began to be manifest in his appearance. His face took on a sharpness of outline which did not escape Mrs. Bennett's kind eyes. Often, when he was not aware of it, she regarded him closely.

"You are working too hard, Richard," she said one evening when he was dining with them soon after Hilda's return. "You ought to go away for a short vacation."

"Why can't you join us at Atlantic City next week?" Hilda suggested. "It won't be the season there for a couple of months yet, but we shall enjoy it all the better for that."

He shook his head.

"Thank you very much, but I could not get away just now."

Later, when they were alone in the drawing-room, Hilda brought the matter up again. It was never easy for her to surrender anything.

upon which she had set her mind. She liked people to fall in at once with her views and see the wisdom of them. In that, as in many other things, she was very like her father.

"Mother was right," she said now, "you do need a change, Richard, and I don't see why you cannot join us at Atlantic City."

"It is not physical rest that I need," he answered.

"Then what?"

"Peace of mind."

She looked at him in some concern.

"I don't think I understand you," she suggested.

He did not answer immediately.

"I have felt for some time, Hilda," he said then, "that I ought to be perfectly frank with you. The relationship between us demands it. The fact is that I feel like a man who is trying to run with his limbs shackled—I mean with regard to my spiritual life," he added, seeing her look of mystification.

"Your spiritual life?" she repeated slowly.

She was looking at him intently, groping for his meaning. Suddenly her expression changed. When she spoke there was more

than a hint of awe in her tone, but no distaste for the thing which she voiced.

"Do you mean that you find yourself inclining toward the church of Rome?" she inquired.

He threw her a quick, almost amused look.

"No!" he said briefly.

"What *do* you mean, Richard?"

"I mean that I cannot remain where I am unless I can preach what I feel—what I *know* to be the truth. I mean that I can no longer divide the seamless garment of Truth and separate the preaching of the gospel from the healing of the sick."

Her face grew hard and cold; it became cruel, too, with the cruelty of ecclesiasticism.

"This is what comes of your friendship with that Mr. Joyce," she said cuttingly. "I have never said as much to you, Richard, but I have often wondered how you could associate with such a man, or find anything in common with the handful of illiterate fanatics which he represents."

"Such a man" is the type of man with whom the Master associated on the shores of Galilee," Richard replied quietly. "I count myself fortunate that I can number among my friends

one so free from guile, so truly and consecratedly a Christian, as is David Joyce. And you make a great mistake when you speak of the people who have gained this vision of the Christ as 'illiterate fanatics.' They circle the globe, and they number in their ranks men and women who represent the very best in music, art, literature and every known profession and walk of life. But that is not the point. A man may be steeped in the classics and yet not have apprehended truth. Or he may be unable to write his own name and have gained a saving knowledge of God. With all my heart and soul I envy any man or woman who possesses that 'pearl of great price'—a healing consciousness!"

Hilda had grown pale. Her face in a few minutes seemed to have become longer and narrower. One got a glimpse of what she would be in later life, and it was not inviting.

"Do you realize at all where this may lead you?" she asked slowly.

"I have faced even that."

"You cannot mean that you would renounce your office? That you would forsake the church of your fathers?"

He paused a moment before answering, as though he wished to choose his words.

"If I could remain where I am and live the Christ-truth as I see it now, if I could point the sick and sinning and sorrowing alike to the healing Christ, perhaps I should not; but you know, as well as I do, how impossible that would be. There is but one thing for me now, Hilda, and that is to live the truth as I see it."

"You mean that you would give up—everything?"

"I read some lines a few days ago which embody exactly what I mean," he said slowly—

“ ‘E’en though the loss of friends I may foresee,
E’en though it lead to judgment-hall and tree,
My Lord, I’ll fully, closely follow thee
And share the labor of thy earthly lot.’ ”

A curious sense of helplessness descended upon Hilda Bennett as she regarded him. Here she was, facing the first real crisis of her life, and she found herself utterly inadequate to deal with it. The props of ritualism, upon which she had always leaned, and which until now had appeared so firm and secure, seemed to be crumbling away, leaving her to sink into a sea of uncertainty and loss. She did not

know where to turn, for there were no avenues of thought open to her. Dogmatism had long ago closed all these. It was imperative that she should lay hold of something and she seized that weapon so easily grasped by the human mind—resentment. A swift, cold tide of hate against the “ex-newspaper reporter,” as she dubbed David Joyce, rose within her.

“I wish you had never known that Mr. Joyce,” she began, “I wish—”

Suddenly she paused and the expression of her face changed.

“I had forgotten—Miss Bray,” she said with cutting distinctness, and Bradford would have found her air of virtuous aloofness, and the slight smile with which the words were uttered, intolerable.

Richard sprang to his feet, the blood rushing in a tide to his face.

“Hilda!”—he broke forth—“do not, I beseech you, imagine that any—any—” he stopped, groping for words—“personal attraction or influence could sway me in this matter! I have searched my own heart deeply before God, and I swear by all I hold pure and true that it is not so! My soul is athirst for God—

for God and for Him alone. Do you think it would cost me nothing to renounce my office? Do you imagine it would be an easy thing to turn my back on that for which my mother's every word and thought fitted me? I have sometimes thought that *death* would be easier! But surely you yourself must know something of that urge of the spirit, that heart-hunger for God which is driving me on, and if you do you will understand!"

"I know this—that our Holy Church, and the opportunity it affords for religious growth, has always been sufficient for me, and always will be," she answered. "I shall never recognize any other form of worship, nor do I believe that ministers of other denominations have any right to administer the sacrament. I would not receive it from their hands."

As Richard looked at her he suddenly realized how useless it was to beat the tide of his passion for righteousness against the hard rock of this formalism, a formalism which throughout all time had found it easy to spell the word—cruelty. Something like terror seized him as he considered what life with such a woman would mean, and a picture rose unbidden—a

picture which made his throat contract—of a girl with a fair-haired child lying within her arms.

"I think, Richard," Hilda said deliberately, "that you ought to understand that if you ever renounce your office as a priest of the Episcopal Church, for any such reason as you hinted at just now, you will at the same time end the relationship which at present exists between you and me."

He bowed his head.

"And I also think," she went on, "that it would be better for you not to come here until you have settled this question. I do not believe my father would wish it, if he knew. You know what his views are with regard to our beloved Church."

Again he bowed.

"'E'en though the loss of friends I may foresee,'" he quoted.

As the door closed behind him he knew that it shut him out forever from much that he had been habituated to think of as pleasant and desirable. No one, not even Bishop Carington, had been a more welcome guest to the comfort and luxury of the Bennett home than had

he. And he instinctively felt that this was but the beginning of such renunciation; that other ties, far closer and dearer, might have to be severed. . . . Bishop Carrington . . . his mother. Thought always balked when he reached that point. He could not face, as yet, what it would mean for her. But even as the full realization of all this came to him, he was conscious of a new and very sweet sense of nearness to Him of whom it was said, "They all forsook him and fled."

CHAPTER XV

Hilda announced to her mother on the following morning her intention of spending a week with a friend, who lived at the other end of the city, and whose husband was a vestryman at St. John's. In view of the approaching Lenten season this friend was entertaining more than usual and had telephoned the day before begging Hilda to come and help her. The latter had given a somewhat qualified assent, the trip to Atlantic City being as yet unsettled. Now, however, she had abandoned that idea, and was glad of the prospect of getting away from home for a while, as this would account for the cessation of Richard's calls.

The hard thing for her in his defection from the Episcopal church was that it seemed to reflect upon that "odor of sanctity" which she always liked to think of as surrounding herself. "Conscious integrity" was written all over Hilda Bennett. It could be seen in the very

way she raised and lowered her eyes; it sounded in the well-modulated voice; it modestly asserted itself in the quietly assured manner.

"Pah!" Bradford had once exclaimed, as he overheard the rather exaggerated compliments of a caller who dealt profusely in adjectives, "a girl who has been carried round on a down pillow all her life! Who has had everything that money could buy and who has never known what temptation meant! It's all negation with Hilda."

No one would have been more surprised than Hilda Bennett herself had she been told that she was a religious *posseur*, and yet such was the case. Truly had Bishop Carrington said to Richard that the glamour of the human mind is hard to fathom! Self has a subtle way of enveloping itself in so many apparently attractive wrappings that if it were possible it would "deceive the very elect." Nothing but the relentless, though loving and merciful hand of absolute truth can strip it of its disguise and present to our astonished gaze the ugly thing which has been so effectively concealed. Once seen and recognized for what it is, however, we no longer need to fear it. It is only when

self parades as selflessness and virtue that it is dangerous.

On the evening of Hilda's arrival at her friend's home a quiet little dinner had been arranged in her honor, one of the guests being Vincent Chalmers. Hilda had, of course, met him before, but she had not on these occasions put herself out to be gracious to him, as she decidedly did tonight. Nor had she ever before expressed her preference for the "higher" form of service used at St. John's. They drifted into a discussion with regard to the use of incense, and this led them to an exchange of reminiscences about foreign churches.

"I attended the midnight mass at the Madeleine on Christmas Eve two years ago," Vincent Chalmers said, "and it was well worth a trip across the 'pond.' Felix Delagneau sang the '*Adeste Fidelis*.' It was glorious! That is a treat in store for you, Miss Bennett, if you have not already heard it."

Hilda signified that she had not, and for a quarter of an hour they talked with fervor of things ecclesiastical. She saw a good deal of Vincent Chalmers during that week. He even called one day for the express purpose of con-

sulting her about the advisability of having a vested girl choir to lead the Sunday school singing at St. John's and to augment the boy choir on special occasions. As a matter of fact he could not well have asked the advice of anyone whose opinion on the subject was more valueless than hers, for she was not in the least musical. She never sang softly to herself as she moved about the house as some women do, that low sound of domestic contentment which is so pleasant to hear. Indeed, had she tried to do so it would have been woefully out of tune. But she liked the idea of vestments and entered into the project eagerly, suggesting dark blue capes and black velvet caps for the girls.

"I only wish—" Vincent Chalmers began, and then paused significantly, but he might just as well have said, "I only wish that you were a communicant of St. John's and that I might have the inestimable benefit of your advice in Church matters," for Hilda quite understood what he meant.

Those days were as balm to her lacerated sense of self-esteem. She found herself constantly deferred to and consulted, now by the

vestry-man and his wife, and now by the Rector of St. John's. Indeed, the way in which the ball of flattery was kept dexterously rolling between these three was an amazing thing! When she returned home she was quite reinstated on her pedestal of conscious integrity, from which gratifying height she could afford to ignore all new "sects" and look with pity on all dissenters.

CHAPTER XVI

Richard received a letter from Bishop Carrington a few days later saying that he expected to be in the vicinity of Morriston on the following Friday and would dine with him in the evening.

That there was some special reason for this visit he did not doubt, and such proved to be the case. When they were seated in the library of St. Luke's rectory after dinner, the Bishop came to the point at once.

He had received a letter from Mr. Bennett, as senior church-warden of the parish, speaking in highest terms of their rector, but deplored the change of thought which had come to him of late. He earnestly hoped the Bishop would talk with Richard as soon as possible and that the result might be satisfactory to all concerned.

In the discussion which inevitably followed, Bishop Carrington made no attempt to deny that the healing of disease was accomplished

at the present time by many who sought to follow fully the footsteps of the Master, and who no longer separated the preaching of the gospel from the healing of the sick. He did not put it exactly in those words, but that was the gist of his admission. Indeed, he could not very well have said otherwise, for the child of his favorite niece had been wonderfully healed of hip-joint disease a few months before through the power of Truth. He even hinted that he believed "these people" had gained a Horeb-height of spiritual vision not attained by the majority of Christians.

"It is not well, however," he added, "to kick away the ladder by which one has climbed, and the ladder by which you have climbed, Richard, is the Church. To kick it aside now that you no longer feel the need of its guidance and support would, it seems to me, show an ingratitude of which I do not think you capable. Our Church needs just such men as you. Do not rob her of her rights—of her hope for the future. Let it not be said of her, as it was said of France after the revolution, that her own sons slit her veins and let out her best blood! Think what she has stood for. Think

of Cranmer and Ridley and Latimer and the splendid men since their time, your own father among them, who would just as willingly have given their lives for her sake. Think of our own sainted Bishop here in Massachusetts—now gone to his God—and pledge yourself anew to remain your Church's 'faithful soldier and servant until your life's end.' "

Richard lifted his head and the face which he turned toward Bishop Carrington's was pale.

"You tell me to think of these things," he said slowly, "when I have thought of nothing else night or day, it seems to me, for months. I have gone over and over that road of argument until I know every foot of it. But always—always I come back to this, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' "

"But surely you do not mean to imply that such knowledge cannot be gained in the Church which you represent?"

"I mean this—that it has come to a place where it is more a question of giving than of getting with me. If I am to know more of God I must be free to give out what I have already apprehended. I cannot go on stifling

it up in my own breast! If I should preach what I know to be the truth, what I have actually proved by demonstration, how long do you suppose I would be kept at St. Luke's? It is a terrible commentary on our churches, Bishop, that one is not free to preach in them the full evangel of Jesus Christ, of salvation from sickness as well as from sin! Already I have been warned, kindly and courteously, but none the less *warned* that I must keep this element out of my sermons. You have that letter from Mr. Bennett which speaks for itself, and there are very few at St. Luke's, not more than two or three, perhaps, who do not thoroughly agree with him. Bishop, I cannot go on like this! I must be free—free to point the sick as well as the sinning to the healing Christ, instead of to inanimate matter. Believe me, there is no other way."

"You have gone far—farther than I had thought," the Bishop said gravely.

"I have only begun," Richard answered, "but it is a glorious beginning! And I would not have you think for a moment that in what I have said I mean to cast any reflection on the Church which it has been my privilege and

honor to serve for the past eight years. No one believes more firmly than I do that the time will come when it will no longer be a question of 'my' church and 'thy' church; when the universal truth which has been the glory and guiding star of every branch of the Christian Church, will be accepted in its fullness and purity. But until that time comes I see nothing for it but for those who cannot longer divide the seamless garment of Truth, and separate the preaching of the gospel from the healing of the sick, to stand shoulder to shoulder in their efforts to bring in the kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

The Bishop sat for some time in silence, his eyes fixed on the floor, his face very sorrowful. There was no clergyman in all his diocese whom he loved as he loved Richard Trent. In his heart he was saying, "It will be truth, or what he deems to be truth, at any cost for him; he is made of the stuff that martyrs are made of." For he quite realized that Richard was aware of the prospects which he was renouncing. It was unusual for so young a man to be rector of such a parish as St. Luke's. His rapid advancement was assured. That this did not

count one jot with him, however, in the present crisis Bishop Carrington well knew. Why—why, he asked himself, could it not have been Vincent Chalmers, instead of Richard Trent? But he also knew that just because it was Richard Trent the situation became possible.

"Have you thought of your mother?" he asked after a while, without looking at Richard.

"Yes."

The Bishop would not further pursue that phase of the subject. Margaret Trent could be relied upon to do what was wise and right when the proper time came and he was not disposed to interfere with her prerogative.

"Well," he said slowly, "at least do nothing hastily, Richard. I wish you could get away for a while. Don't the Bennetts usually go to Atlantic City about this time of year?"

"Yes, but they have changed their plans this season. Anyway it would make no difference, Bishop."

"No rupture with Hilda, I hope?" the Bishop asked somewhat anxiously.

"N-no," Richard answered, and made the significant addition, "not as yet."

They did not discuss the matter further, and at about nine o'clock Richard accompanied him to the station, for the Bishop was going to take the midnight train for New York. They talked little on the way, but, perhaps, never had these two men loved each other as they did now, when they instinctively felt that their paths in life were about to part. There was a lump in Bishop Carrington's throat. Again and again he seemed to see the lifted, thoughtful face of a little lad, and the earnestness of the deep blue eyes as he asked, "Why don't clergymen heal sick people now the way Jesus did?" And now this little lad, whom he had watched grow into strong and purposeful manhood, was going out of his life—out of his church! No greater sorrow, in all his varied career, had come to Bishop Carrington.

As they left the street car and crossed to the station a man staggered out of a saloon and reeled past them. Bishop Carrington turned sharply and looked after him. The man also turned, trying to keep his balance as he put out one hand in wavering salute. The electric light struck full on his face and the Bishop recognized him. It was John Barnes.

CHAPTER XVII

How John Barnes gained entrance to the Bennett home could only be accounted for by a change of servants. The new maid who admitted him acknowledged afterwards that she knew he had been drinking, but supposed him to be one of Mr. Bennett's workmen. The latter had only arrived home a few minutes before, as it was not yet six o'clock. Indeed, Barnes had, in all probability, been watching for him.

When James Bennett entered his library, in response to the maid's announcement that someone wished to see him, he was greeted first by an overpowering smell of liquor, and then by a thick-set man who regarded him with undisguised hate. The visitor's breath was coming with difficulty, as though he had been running. He turned a shabby cap round and round in his hands—nervous hands, that could not keep still.

James Bennett had heard of cases where

workmen with a grievance, real or imaginary, had tried to wreak vengeance on their employers. He did not know this man, at least he did not remember ever having seen him before, but then there were hundreds of men in his employ whom he did not know by sight. In spite of a momentary feeling of alarm he stood his ground and asked:

“What is your business with me?”

Barnes took a step toward him, his head thrust forward, his eyes narrowing to slits in their concentrated hate.

“My business with you—” he said thickly—“my business with you is to tell you that you’re the — rascal that ever drew breath, as your father was before you!”

Instinctively the older man fell back a pace; the other’s attitude was sufficiently fierce as to suggest physical violence.

“Liars and cheats, both of you!” Barnes broke out. “It’s my father’s money, and my money, that you bought all this with—” and he waved his hand to the luxurious surroundings—“John Barnes was the man that should ‘a’ had his share of it. John Barnes was the man that made you and your father rich! And

now you think to make it up by giving charity to my children, do ye? *Charity!* I'd 'a' seen 'em starving in the streets—I'd 'a' seen all three of 'em in their coffins first—if I'd known whose money was keeping 'em. I'd—”

He poured forth a stream of invective and abuse that seemed to blister the very air. James Bennett raised one hand in an attempt to stop him, but it was quite useless. Barnes' voice rose louder and higher and he struck the table with a force that threatened to split the wood—the temporary force of drunken madness.

Suddenly a step sounded outside and Bradford Bennett, closely followed by McKane, entered the room.

“Look here,” he said, with ominous calm, “I don't know who you are, and I don't care, but you can't come into this house and make any such infernal row as you're making—understand that!”

Barnes' bloodshot eyes turned to him and, if possible, the hate in them intensified.

“Well, I know who you are,” he sneered, “you're another of the —— Bennett thieves!”

McKane was not a man easily frightened, he

had had too varied an experience for that, but when he saw the look that leaped into Bradford Bennett's eyes he uttered an involuntary, "Lord save us!" under his breath. Bradford strode up to John Barnes, his hands closing and unclosing at his sides, his whole body tense, like a tiger that is getting ready to spring. And, indeed, the sight of those two murderous faces, so near together, was sufficient to strike terror to any heart.

"Get out!" he hissed, through clenched teeth.
"Do you *hear*—get out!"

"You go—"

Before the sentence could be finished Bradford's hands had leaped from his sides. They had already touched John Barnes' throat when a sound fell on the tenseness of the room. It was a child's voice calling in sweet, shrill tones—

"Daddy—*Daddy!*"

Bradford's hands remained poised in mid-air, as though some unseen force held them back from their fell intent. The tension of his fingers slowly relaxed. A look descended upon his face as of one remembering something that had been temporarily forgotten.

“Daddy!”

Jean came into the room, not yet disrobed for the night, but in the little white frock that she had worn all day. She went straight to her father and tucked her hand into one of his, which had fallen at his side.

“I gotta say my noo prayer,” she reminded him.

She lead him to a chair, and, yielding to the pressure of her small hands, he sank into it. Immediately she wedged herself in between his knees, and laying her forehead against his chest began—

“‘Father, Mother, God,
Loving me—’”

She paused, waiting for the prompting which did not come.

“I don’t a-member,” she suggested, lifting her face to his.

He was staring straight before him, still with the look of one slowly remembering something. She put up one hand and touched his cheek.

“Jean don’t *a-member*,” she insisted.

His eyes came back to her. As if without his own volition his lips parted and the words,

"Guard me," fell from them. Suddenly he held her close, hiding his face in her soft curls.

"Guard me—" he whispered—"guard me!" and his whole body trembled.

She pressed her forehead against him once more.

"—'while I sleep,
Guide my'—"

Again she paused. Did the heaving of those massive shoulders convey to her any sense of need?

"'Guide my (Daddy's) feet
Up to Thee,'"

she finished triumphantly.

She took his hand again.

"'M on," she urged—this being her usual contraction of "come on," "Daddy gotta read about angels over Jean."

As she lead him from the room McKane put one arm through that of John Barnes and propelled him into the hall by another door. Once there, the spell which the child's presence seemed to have cast over them all was dispelled, as far as Barnes was concerned. He struggled to return to the library, but his strength, weak-

ened as he was by excessive drinking, was no match for that of McKane.

"Ye blithering ijit!" the latter muttered, with scant ceremony, "if ye have a grain of sense left in yer drink-befuddled head, get out of this while ye can! An' ye may be thankful to yer dying day that yer not walking away a corpse!"

When he had closed and bolted the door he drew the back of his hand across his forehead, upon which a cold sweat had started during those moments when murder seemed imminent.

"Whew!" he breathed, "of all the near squeaks that I ever seen that was the nearest! If the little girl hadn't come in when she did—"

He stood still in the hall and listened. The house was very quiet, and from upstairs came the low sound of a man's voice reading. McKane could not distinguish the words, but he knew they were but another version of a psalm which his parents had loved, and which, as a boy, he had often sung standing beside his mother in the little Kirk in Belfast.

CHAPTER XVIII

McKane received strict injunctions from Mr. Bennett that night not to mention to any-one the incident which had taken place in the library. Mrs. Bennett and Hilda were fortunately absent at the time, and he explained that he did not want the ladies frightened.

"All the same, 'tis a sharp look-out I'd have kept on the doors and windas for some time to come, if I was you, sir," McKane suggested. "That fella isn't going to give up as easy as all that."

No sign of John Barnes was forthcoming, however, as time went on. He did not remove his children from the "Children's Friend" Home as might have been expected after his outburst. Indeed, no trace of him could be found either in Wayville or Morriston. He seemed to have disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed

him, and James Bennett concluded that the man had gone out West; deciding, no doubt, that he was safer out of Massachusetts.

For reasons of his own the senior member of the firm of Bennett and Son did not want the affair made public, and it was a great relief to his mind when nothing more was seen of Barnes.

"Learned his lesson, I guess," he said to McKane, with some satisfaction.

"I wouldn't be too sure of that if I was you," McKane replied.

Mr. Bennett glanced at him sharply.

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, I couldn't help hearing some o' what he said, before I come into the room that night. Thinks he's got a grievance of some kind, don't he?"

"Yes . . . he thinks so."

"Liquor and a grudge ain't a very healthy combination," McKane remarked succinctly.

"Mr. Bradford has never talked to you about —about matters connected with the firm, has he?" James Bennett asked, with another keen look.

"No, sir, never."

"If he ever does, McKane, it would be very unwise of you to repeat it."

"All right, sir."

"But there's a nigger in the fence somewhere, or I miss my guess," McKane thought shrewdly as he turned away.

Elizabeth had occasion to go to see Mrs. Bennett a few days later, in order to overlook some clothing which had been sent up on approval for the children in the Home. When she came downstairs Bradford was standing in the hall, evidently waiting to speak to her.

"Miss Bray," he began, with some hesitation, "do you think anyone who had not read that book you lent me would teach that little prayer to a child?"

"It was Jean's mother who taught it to her, was it not?" Elizabeth asked.

"Yes."

"I think it is extremely probable that she *has* read the book, as she is vitally interested in the subject with which it deals."

"How do you know?"

"Because I have been in correspondence with her since the day that McKane came to ask me to write out Jean's new prayer for you."

He gazed at her in amazement.

"Would you come in here for a moment, Miss Bray?" he asked, and Elizabeth passed into the library.

"Things have been happening so strangely of late that I am somewhat bewildered," he explained. "I wish you would tell me how it came about that you have been corresponding with my wife?"

"I believed the incident about Jean would mean a great deal to her," Elizabeth answered, "so I wrote and told her of it; and I have had several beautiful letters from her, Mr. Bennett. In one of them she said, 'I have only known the power of Truth for a few months, but I can truly say in the words of the psalm, that it has brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.' "

He walked to the window and stood looking out, with his back toward her.

"A horrible pit," he said, as though to himself, "that's it, a horrible pit." He turned and faced her. "Miss Bray," he said slowly, "something happened here last week which I cannot explain, though I have tried to account for it

in a hundred different ways," and he went on to tell her of the occurrence which had taken place in the library.

"I know that a few months ago Jean's voice would not have held me back from strangling that fellow—nothing could have held me back. But something *did*, and it is something of which I have been vaguely aware ever since the night you read that psalm. *What is it?* That's what I've got to find out."

"Mr. Bennett," she answered earnestly, "it is the ever-present, healing Christ—the law of God—and it can make you absolutely free."

He was looking at her with intent, brooding eyes.

"Isn't there some man who believes these things you do, that I could talk with?" he asked, after a while.

"There are many in this city."

"There's some one who is a friend of Mr. Trent's, isn't there?"

"Yes, Mr. Joyce."

"I wonder if he would come and see me?"

"I am sure he would gladly do so. I will telephone when I get home and ask him, if you like."

"I wish you would."

David's interview with Bradford Bennett took place on the following evening and lasted until almost midnight. It was inevitable that in his ten years' experience of ministration to the sick and sinning he should have listened to many saddening histories, have been compelled to look into the depths of much sin, but never had he listened to the laying bare of a human soul which filled him with such compassion as did this. The loneliness of such an existence, that was the thing which impressed him most. The superficial intercourse with others, so unworthy of the name of friendship. The awful dread of being alone, of being unentertained for a moment. Excitement, intoxication of the senses, that was the insatiable demand. No wonder, David thought, that suicide was so appallingly common among men of this class. It was the carnal mind preying upon itself until mortal existence became a horror, to be escaped from at any cost.

"I never had any use for religion," Bradford ended. "I watched my sister, more closely than she ever knew, and I couldn't see that she was any less selfish than I was. She went

the way that her tastes led her, regardless of others, and I went mine; that was the way it looked to me. If there is any heart and soul in that kind of religion the husk of ecclesiasticism is so thick that I, for one, could not penetrate it. I made up my mind long ago that there was nothing there that would save me. Don't think that I am trying to excuse myself," he added. "I do not know yet that I am even worthy to pray, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' "

"The fact that you can honestly say that proves that you are," David answered. "The only bar to such a prayer is insincerity."

"Mr. Joyce," Bradford said, "you are almost an entire stranger to me, except that I have heard of you from Richard Trent, but you are the only man, the only person, to whom I have ever laid bare my inmost self."

"No," David replied, "you haven't laid bare your inmost self—at least, not your true self, for you don't know yet what that is, although you have had glimpses of it ever since you heard that psalm read by a good woman. Your acquaintance with this real self will grow, and you will find it an astonishing acquaintance.

The other, the counterfeit that we have looked upon tonight, never again give it any power over you in your own thought. You don't need to fear it, for you have 'an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast' now, an anchor that will hold, no matter what strain you put upon it."

"You don't know how I've looked at people who were normal, men like you and Richard Trent, for instance, and envied them with my whole soul! If you knew, as I do, how many people seem to be thrust into evil without their own volition, the children who seem to be in the midst of it, in the clutch of it, almost before they can speak plainly, your compassion would be infinite."

"I have long realized that," David answered gravely.

Bradford stood up and faced him.

"I believe," he said slowly, "that I am face to face with my one hope—my one chance of salvation—and, God helping me, I'm not going to let it slip! I've been in hell long enough. If there's such a state as heaven, I am going to find it!"

David also stood up, and anyone who saw

him at that moment would have understood how it was that to a vast number of people this man, with his round, plain face and meagre stature, was positively handsome.

“‘And he arose and came to his father . . . and . . . said, Father, I have sinned,’” he quoted gently.

CHAPTER XIX

Jean having seen the duck family which McKane had made for the little ones in the "Children's Friend" Home, of course wanted a set like them, and during his leisure moments he was usually busy whittling away cheerfully, whistling meanwhile his favorite air of, "Ye Banks and Braes of Bonny Doon." Indeed, Jean and he had become fast friends, her own particular name for him being, "Micky-Mac," which she sometimes varied with, "Micky-Mick." Whenever she caught sight of him she would trot after him, pouring out a chirping strain of "Micky-Mac's," as she ran, for, in spite of the fact that McKane had seen a good deal of the seamy side of life, and would never have thought of calling himself a religious man, there was in him something clean and strong, undoubtedly implanted there by the father and mother who had loved the ninety-first psalm, and which Jean instinctively recognized.

In order that Bradford might not be deprived of any of the child's society while she was with them, Mrs. Bennett sometimes brought her sewing—which was usually something for one of the little inmates of the Home—to his rooms in the afternoon; for she was one of those domestic women to whom society functions were a good deal of a weariness of the flesh! As she entered the room one day she saw that Bradford was seated near the window, engrossed in making a pen and ink sketch of McKane, who was putting the finishing touches to the mother-duck, while Jean looked on entranced. He motioned with his pen, without looking up, as she passed the table, on which lay several papers and books.

"You'll find it in that book," he suggested.

"What?" she asked with a smile.

"What you were asking me about this morning, Jean's new prayer."

She took up the volume and sat down opposite him.

"I find it, G'an'ma!" Jean went to her and was lifted on to her lap. The mother duck was finished, and the duckling on which McKane had begun was not quite so interesting

in its primal stages, before any indication of head or tail had appeared.

"Miss Bray lent me that book," Bradford said, while he sketched, "and I quite forgot to ask her, when I saw her the other day, where I could get it and others by the same author."

"I can tell you," Mrs. Bennett answered quietly, "for I have them all."

He raised his head and looked at her and she was amazed at the changed expression of his eyes. The old dark, brooding look was almost gone, being replaced by one that suggested the boyhood which he had never known.

"You sly little mother!" he said, shaking his pen at her.

She turned to the window to hide her tears, though both men were too engrossed with their several occupations to notice her. It was years since she had seen Bradford touch his sketching materials, with which he was really very clever, and the fact that he did so now filled her with hope and joy. Indeed, never in his whole life had she known him to be so normal and happy as he appeared this afternoon.

"Mac, why in the world have you got such

a tarnation jaw?" he demanded as he worked.
"It's as square as—as—"

"As meself?" McKane suggested, with an involuntary wink.

"Yes, as yourself," Bradford agreed, "and that's about the squarest thing I know."

"And the quarest," McKane added with conviction.

What had happened—what had happened? Mrs. Bennett asked herself as she listened to this good-natured banter. In these rooms, which had been the scene of so many terrible outbursts of passion, and which she had always instinctively dreaded to enter, was an atmosphere of joy and peace, of which Jean—as she went from one to the other, now looking up into her grandmother's face, now inspecting the progress of the duckling and now leaning against her father's knee—seemed the embodiment.

"Oh, Thou divine Love," she prayed in her heart, "grant that I may not limit Thy power! 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.'

"It was the father of the demoniacal boy who prayed that," she thought, "and this is my boy, although he is not my own son. I am all the

mother he has ever known, and oh, I want to see him well and normal and happy!

“Lord, I believe—I *believe*—”

Bradford was holding the sketch away from him, looking at it with critical gaze.

“You’re no beauty, Mac,” he remarked, “but you have a style all your own, and I think I’ve caught it.”

“Then keep it, sir,” McKane counselled, “for I never could catch it meself, that’s sure!”

Jean had placed the mother-duck on her father’s knee.

“Daddy draw mother ducky?” she pleaded, looking up into his face.

CHAPTER XX

A babel of voices greeted Elizabeth when she entered the playroom of the Home a few weeks after the opening of the extension. The occasion was Jacob Jacobski's birthday, and Jean had been allowed to come and take part in the festivities.

Every child who was old enough to stand was now lined up, all ready to take part in the entrancing game of "family," but there seemed to be some difference of opinion as to who should play the important roles of father and mother.

"I think," Elizabeth decided, "that as it is Jacob's birthday, and as Jean is our guest, we ought to let them be the Daddy and Mammy."

"Well, I'll be the Daddy," Jean announced immediately,

Jacob regarded her with a critical eye.

"You can't be the Daddy," he declared, "Daddys don't wear hair-ribbons."

Jean put up one small hand, as though to

make quite sure that the pink bow—that insignia of femininity which would prevent her being the head of the family—was actually there. Having ascertained this fact she gave in gracefully, like a dutiful daughter of Eve!

"If you're going to be the Daddy," a little six-year-old girl piped up, regarding Jacob solemnly, "you'll have to go out an' work."

This was a phase of the matter which had not presented itself to him and he considered it gravely.

"Daddys don't always go out an' work," he declared at last. Jacob, alas! knew whereof he spoke.

"If they don't the Mammys has to, an' when it's the Mammys that work there ain't enough to eat," the child maintained, with many emphatic nods. She, too, alas! spoke from experience.

Jacob viewed his numerous brood, and evidently deciding that such a state of things could not be tolerated in this well-regulated family, picked up his make-belief dinner pail—which in this instance consisted of a well-worn shoe that one of the babies had kicked off, such is the power of childish imagination!—and hur-

ried away. He returned in an incredibly short time, however, to listen to a detailed recital of the wrong-doings of his progeny from his little helpmeet, this being regarded as the correct and cheerful mode of procedure in other families besides Jacob's!

When the novelty of the game began to wear off Elizabeth gathered the children around her and told them a story. During the recital Jean happened to be sitting next to John Barnes, junior, and more than once she glanced up at him. When the story was ended she asked, 'with the friendliness that was natural to her—

"What's your name?"

"Johnny." He glanced at her askance.

"Johnny what?"

"Barnes." He edged a little away from her.

But Jean was not to be so easily repulsed. She put out one hand and touched his tentatively. For some strange reason she seemed to have taken a fancy to John Barnes, junior, who, to tell the truth, was rather an obstreperous youngster and somewhat of a trial to Elizabeth. For the rest of the afternoon the fair

head with the big pink bow was never to be seen very far from Johnny's vicinity, and it must have been an unnatural boy, indeed, who could have resisted these advances. Johnny capitulated sufficiently to take the small fingers in his, and the strange sight might have been seen of Bradford Bennett's child and John Barnes' child walking about hand in hand, in one of those sweet friendships which sometimes spring up between small children.

Where now was the bitter enmity with which their grandfathers had regarded each other for a quarter of a century? Where the murderous hate with which their fathers had looked into each other's eyes? Swept away in this pure wave of child love! Elizabeth, as she watched them, thought of those words of the Master's, "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." She had recently received a card containing some verses from Jean's mother, and the last of these recurred to her—

"And now I know why the Master said
 If the kingdom we would see,
The purified heart of a little child
 Must come to you and to me.

"So I pray to my God that I may keep
E'en through pathways rough and wild,
In tenderer love and simpler trust,
The heart of a little child."

When the time came for Jean to leave she raised her face in farewell to her little partner of the afternoon. But this was asking a good deal of "five, an'-goin'-on-six" boyhood. Johnny wriggled his body, looking at her sideways. As the flower-like face remained lifted to his, however, he stooped with a somewhat shame-faced smile and touched his cheek to hers. That caress marked a new era in the life of John Barnes, junior. At bed-time that night he came to Elizabeth with his most cherished possession, a gaily painted whip which it was the delight of his life to crack.

"She can have it, if she likes," he suggested.

"Jean?"

"Yes'm."

"Thank you, John. I'm sure she will be delighted with it."

Elizabeth did not make the mistake of refusing the gift. It was the first unselfish thing, in all her experience of him, that she had known John Barnes, junior, to do.

CHAPTER XXI

The exchange of pulpits which had been decided upon by Richard Trent and Vincent Chalmers was twice postponed by the latter clergyman, for one reason or another. Richard's defection from orthodox theology was beginning to be noised outside the precincts of his own parish, and the rector of St. John's was not at all sure that his presence would be welcome at the latter church. For private reasons of his own, however, Vincent Chalmers was very desirous of preaching at St. Luke's just at this time, and shortly before Lent the exchange was duly effected.

The rector of St. John's chose as the subject of his sermon "The Fasts and Feasts of Our Holy Church." This was a delicate compliment to Hilda Bennett, and reminiscent of several conversations which he had held with her on the same topic, a fact to which she was quite alive.

He spoke eloquently of the importance of
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such seasons and the opportunity they afforded for religious advancement. No one, he averred, could expect to grow in grace who neglected them. Those members of the church who were punctilious in these observances felt a glow of conscious virtue, and glanced covertly from under lowered eyelids at certain others whose laxity was well known. The entire congregation felt that after being led for months through paths so new and broad as to be decidedly disconcerting, they had got back into the safe, comfortable rut of sound doctrine.

The visiting clergyman received nothing short of a decorous ovation at the close of the service. There were those who on the way home frankly admitted that they wished they lived nearer to St. John's and could hear him every Sunday. Mrs. Bennett was one of the few who missed Richard Trent. As she raised her eyes to his face, when he entered the pulpit, she was always conscious of the selfless yearning, the deep desire to bring to the waiting people some thought of God, which filled his heart. There was no such moment of consecrated silence today.

Vincent Chalmers dined with the Bennetts and had the gratifying assurance that his host found his society very pleasant. A few adroit questions from Hilda guided the conversation into channels where he shone with a halo of ecclesiastical lustre. He enlarged upon the subject of his sermon, Hilda and Mr. Bennett listening with the fervor of the extreme ritualist. "The Church," by which he meant that branch of the Christian church which he represented, was his slogan. Richard's name was only mentioned once, and then by Vincent Chalmers himself, with an impersonal but grieved disapproval. In fact, his manner silently apologized for having mentioned it at all.

Richard's sermon at St. John's was mediocre. The facts which he had to present seemed to him for the most part discouraging. They represented a great deal of outlay and labor, with comparatively small returns. The sermon ended with the usual appeal for money and the collection which followed showed that the people had not been much impressed.

He dined with the senior church-warden, Mr. Darrow, who fell asleep in his chair immedi-

ately after dinner, leaving his guest to the tender mercies of Mrs. Darrow number two; a large exuberant young woman of whom Richard afterwards retained but two distinct impressions, a superfluity of diamond rings and a paucity of terminal g's.

He heaved an unconscious sigh of relief when the door closed behind him. He was glad the whole thing was over, glad to be alone. He raised his eyes to the clearness of the sky's blue, and as he did so those wonderful opening lines from "The Hound of Heaven" came to him—

"I fled Him; down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaèd hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.' "

When he reached the center of the city he boarded a car which took him to the house where David Joyce lived. He was not at all sure that he should find David at home, but there was in his heart a great desire to see him.

"I suppose you are wondering what brought me?" he said, when he was seated in the latter's room.

"I'm doing nothing of the kind," David answered gladly. "Do you suppose my namesake stopped to wonder, when *his* Jonathan came to see him?"

Richard leaned back in his chair, with eyes closed.

"For though I knew His love who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest having Him, I should have nought beside,'"

he quoted. "That is just how it has been with me, David, although I have not been aware of it until today."

"That is the way it is with all of us until we come to see that He is the 'chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely.'"

"You have read 'The Hound of Heaven'?" Richard asked.

"Yes."

"Parts of it have kept coming to me all the afternoon. Those 'strong Feet' have followed after me for months. Now, at last, I can say, 'Halts by me that Footfall.'"

"Thank God!"

"'My harness piece by piece,' has been 'hewn from me,'" Richard went on. "'I am defenceless utterly!'"

Neither of them spoke for a while, then David said gently—

"There was a text in our lesson last week that meant a great deal to me—'I will drive out the enemy from before thee.' I think the enemy is often some subtle argument of the human mind which would, if possible, block our way and hold us back. And it is just this that the law of God will drive out from before us. I sometimes feel as if my only hope lay in the very inexorability of divine law. It is the one thing with which we cannot juggle, try as we may, delude ourselves as we may. 'Those strong Feet' will follow after until we yield unconditionally. I love those words, 'unconditional surrender.' Not bargaining with God, wonder-

ing how much we need give and how much we can hold back, but the spirit which says—

"Take Thine own way with me, dear Lord,
Thou canst not otherwise than bless,
I launch me forth upon a sea
Of boundless love and tenderness!
I could not choose a larger bliss
Than to be wholly Thine, and mine
A will whose highest joy is this—
To ceaselessly unclasp in Thine." "

"Thank you, David," Richard said simply. He stood up and held out his hand. "Thank you for all that you have done for me," he added.

"There was not much that I could do—only to love you!"

"Have you ever realized the compelling winsomeness of the truth, when unmarred by finite personality—of what the Master meant when he said, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me'? The greatest thing we can do for any fellow-being is to live the Christ. It is what we are, not what we say, that compels others to follow."

When he was leaving David said—

"You will let the future shape itself before you, as divine Love directs?"

"Yes. I am going to see my mother immediately. I shall probably leave for Baltimore tomorrow night. Further than that I do not see."

That same evening Hilda Bennett had a long talk with her parents, the outcome of which was that before retiring she wrote to Richard ending their engagement. In this her father heartily concurred. Indeed, it was a great relief to his mind that she proposed it herself, and thus saved him the necessary but unpleasant duty of exercising his parental authority. But her mother sighed as she went upstairs, for she loved Richard Trent. And yet—and yet, would she have it otherwise? That was a question which she could not answer.

CHAPTER XXII

Mrs. Trent did not need to look at her son a second time in order to see that something more than the periodic gratification of his desire to see her lay behind this visit. She said nothing of this to her daughter, however, and during dinner, on the night of his arrival, conversation flowed along in the pleasant channels possible only to people who have many interests in common.

Richard's sister inquired about the Bennetts, and especially for Hilda, whereupon he told them that his engagement was at an end. The younger woman hoped afterwards that her sudden gasp of relief did not betray the gratification that this news gave her. She had never liked Hilda Bennett. She had accepted her, as she would have accepted anything, or anyone, connected with Richard, but she had not loved her. The elder had glanced at him for a moment with a mother's keen scrutiny. Was

this what had brought him to see her? She scarcely thought so.

Bishop Carrington's name came into the conversation frequently.

"I saw him recently at the railway station in Philadelphia," Mrs. Trent said, "and I thought there was a shade of sadness on his kind face which I had never noticed before. I fancied he wanted to speak to me about something in particular, but my train came and there was no time. I have been expecting to hear from him, but he has not written."

Richard did not reply. He knew that of late there had seemed to be an accumulation of trying circumstances for the Bishop, of which his own withdrawal from the Episcopal church was but one. Even now the suggestion to go no further came to him. It would be so easy *not* to speak to his mother of the thing that had brought him to Baltimore, to let her think it was due to the rupture of his engagement.

There is, perhaps, no greater conflict than the struggle between the apparent welfare of those we love and the call of Truth. "If I follow the truth as I see it," a young woman had once said to David Joyce, "and leave the

denomination to which I belong, it will kill my mother." "If you are a better and kinder daughter to her than you have ever been before, it won't," David had answered. "No, not if she sees you daily becoming more compassionate and merciful, not if you dethrone self and exalt the Christ."

Suppose, Richard thought now, that everyone who found himself in this position, who was compelled to make this choice, had put human ties first, where would the cause of truth have been? He recognized the fact that the mental pictures of disaster which the human mind conjures up as the penalty of fully following one's vision of the Christ, are but arguments to hinder, if possible, such consecration. He knew that it was possible to wholly follow the Lord, with an all-encompassing love for those dear ones who do not as yet see as we do, and that this very loyalty to the very highest right one comprehends will reap its own reward in the bringing into the kingdom of those dear ones themselves.

Knowing her son's fondness for an open fire Mrs. Trent had one lighted in her own small sitting-room. When Richard and she were

seated before it, later in the evening, she looked across at him and said—

“What is it, son?”

“Mother,” he said slowly, “if I am to preach the gospel at all, either by word or deed, it must be the full evangel of Jesus Christ, of salvation from sickness as well as from sin.”

She did not answer and he went on—

“That, I am sorry to say, I cannot do and remain where I am. I have honestly tried, but it is not acceptable. Nor do I know of any clergyman of any church who could stand up in his pulpit today and point his people to the ever-present Christ, instead of to inanimate matter, for the healing of disease. My heart often cries out, How have we wandered so far away from the teaching of the Master?”

“Then this means that you are going to leave your Church?” she questioned.

“I see no other way.”

They sat in silence for some time, then Richard said—

“This must be a great shock to you, dear.”

“No,” she answered, “I have seen it coming.”

“You have something more than that to say to me, Mother?” he pleaded.

"Yes, I have."

Even then she did not speak immediately, and he knew that she was silently seeking for self-control.

"When you were born, Richard," she said at last, "and they told me that my baby was a boy, I thanked God, even then in my weakness, that I had borne a son who could follow in the footsteps of his father and serve the Church which he had served."

She paused, and Richard unconsciously drew a deep breath. He had foreseen that this interview might be the crucial test, the thing that would tear him in sunder, and involuntarily his lips formed the words, "Let this cup pass from me!"

"No one but myself knows what it meant to me when I saw you take your ordination vows," she went on, "and when I first received the sacrament from your hands. I felt as though my purpose in life was accomplished."

"Mother—" he began, but she put up one hand to stop him.

"I have seen for some time whither your steps were tending," she continued. "I have watched others follow the same road. And I

have prayed, with my whole soul I have prayed for strength to keep my hands off your life! That I might not yield to the sore temptation to use my mother-love, my mother-influence to hold you to that which has meant so much to me. I will not deny that I have had my dark—my very dark hour; that at times the struggle has seemed to take all my courage and strength. But, by the grace of God, I think that I have won. And tonight I can say to you, my son, Follow your vision of the Christ—not your Mother's vision, not your Bishop's vision, not your Church's vision, but your own vision. Follow it wheresoever it may lead you, and never doubt that the spirit of truth will guide you into all truth."

Richard Trent rose and bending one knee laid his forehead on his mother's hands, as they lay clasped in her lap. And as she felt his tears warm upon her fingers Margaret Trent knew a moment of joy whose rapture was a foretaste of heaven.

After a while he lifted his head and looked into her face.

"I might have known that *you* would not fail me!" he said brokenly.

CHAPTER XXIII

Although Richard left Baltimore the next day he did not immediately return to Morriston. He went, instead, to a quiet little place which he knew of on the Massachusetts coast and remained there for several days. He wanted to be alone—alone with God—that he might further listen, as Elizabeth had counselled, for the voice of the Good Shepherd.

He never afterwards forgot what those days meant to him, filled as they were with peace and with a deep and holy joy. At one time, when the conflict through which he had passed seemed keenest, he had awakened one morning saying, “It cannot be always striving, there must come the entering in.” Now the entering in had come, that entering into the joy of his Lord which entire consecration alone makes possible, and he knew something of what the Master meant when he said, “Your joy no man taketh from you.”

On the evening of his return to Morriston he

saw David and told him the outcome of his interview with his mother. David's eyes were not dry as he listened.

"That's often the way," he said meditatively, "we seem to see some mountain of trial ahead of us, and when we get to the place, it isn't there at all! Indeed, just as in your case, we very often find a blessing waiting for us instead."

"I was thinking of that as I came along in the train this morning," Richard answered, "and picturing how the disciples at Damascus must have felt when they knew that Saul of Tarsus had actually started, with the power and authority of the chief priests behind him, in order to bring the Christians bound to Jerusalem. There did not seem to be one loophole of escape for them. From a human standpoint it was about as dark and unpromising a situation as one could well imagine. But Saul of Tarsus never arrived at Jerusalem. In his place came 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.' "

"That is so," David answered, "for evil never does arrive at its destination, no matter how auspiciously it may seem to start on its mission of destruction. The Christ stands in the way.

I shall remember that when some ‘Saul of Tarsus’ looms upon my horizon, or when mere temporal power threatens to take me ‘bound to Jerusalem.’ ”

“ ‘God is my strong salvation;
What foe have I to fear?’ ”

Richard quoted.

When he rose to go David laid one hand on his shoulder.

“Richard,” he said earnestly—and it was the first time that he had called this friend, whom he so loved and admired, by his first name—“you are going into the work of helping to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, and you will meet with temptations that I never met with—pride of intellect, pride of education, perhaps even pride of personal appearance. You may never have been aware of these before, but you will be aware of them now. You may be assailed as I never was assailed. Pray for humility. Do not allow the splendid promise of the present to be blighted. You will think that I am speaking pretty plainly, but I do so from a heart filled with love and pride in you! You spoke, when you were here

last, of the compelling winsomeness of the truth when unmarred by finite personality, and I have thought a great deal about that since. ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.’ That is the way we must exalt the Christ. Self must be away down at the bottom—out of sight.”

“Yes,” Richard answered gravely, “I realize all that, David.”

At the door he paused and looked straight into his friend’s eyes.

“There is something I want to ask you,” he said. “Your friendship with Elizabeth Bray, is it—more than friendship?”

“No, although there is no woman whom I admire more sincerely, or for whom I have a deeper affection.”

“Thank you.”

Among the many letters which Richard wrote that week was one to Mrs. Bennett. Her reply was like herself, full of kindly interest and good will. She expressed an earnest wish that she might see him before he left Morriston, and suggested that as it might not be pleasant for him to come to the house, un-

der existing conditions, he could call on her at the "Children's Friend" Home, where she would be on the following afternoon.

This Richard did, and they talked long and freely. It could not truly be said that in her inmost heart she grieved because he was not going to be Hilda's husband, although she would have welcomed the close relationship which such a marriage would have involved. Never for a moment had Mrs. Bennett been disloyal to her own child, never had she admitted that there were times when the longing for filial love was a hunger with her. When imagination tried to picture what "might have been" she promptly shut her eyes to it. But there are things which we know, even though we may not admit them to ourselves, and out of her own starved experience she knew what Richard's must inevitably have been.

She told him of the wonderful improvement in Bradford's condition which she had observed of late, and which McKane confirmed.

"Bradford is proving that 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus' can annul every so-called mortal law, even the law of heredity," Richard answered.

He was beginning to wonder if he should have to go without seeing Elizabeth when Mrs. Bennett rose and brought her into the room.

While she sat looking from one strong, purposeful young face to the other, as they talked, a thought came to Mrs. Bennett which filled her kind heart with joy. How delightful, how eminently fitting that would be! Both so good and brave and true! When Richard rose to go she said goodbye to him rather hurriedly, and with a murmured excuse left the room.

He held out his hand to Elizabeth and she placed her own within it.

“Elizabeth—” he spoke the name slowly, as if he loved the sound—“I have done as you counselled; I have listened for the voice of the Good Shepherd, and it has come, and I have not mistaken the direction from which it called. I am trying to follow where it is leading me.”

She did not speak, but the joy in her face was beautiful to see.

“I am free,” he went on, “free in every way, to go where my Lord wants me to go, to be what He wants me to be. I have reached the

place which I know you had already reached,
the place where I can say—

'I know no life divided
O Lord of life from Thee.'"

Her eyes met his with a clear, steadfast look, but she did not reply. This was one of the supreme moments of Elizabeth Bray's life, and it was characteristic of her that she met it with a calm and strength which suggested the depth of her nature. So complete was her consecration, so earnest her desire to do the will of God and to do that only, that even now she would not put forth her hand to gain this, to her, so great a gift, unless that seemed to be the way in which divine love and wisdom was leading her.

"Dear," Richard said, "shall we let God determine our future for us, and not try to decide now what it shall or shall not contain?"

"Yes."

Her love for him at that moment was so pure, so free from earthly taint, that she could have given him then and there to the Master's service, even had this meant that she never again should have beheld him with human

vision. And when the time came that she had thus to give him, when in order that he might be about his Father's business he was absent from her for months at a time, she counted it all joy.

"Those that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it,'" she quoted.

Richard stooped and touched his lips to the hand which he held.

"God bless thee!" he said fervently.

CHAPTER XXIV

Jean's visit to her grandmother which had been planned to last a few weeks had run into as many months. Every day Mrs. Bennett expected to receive a letter from her daughter-in-law suggesting that the child should return, but no such letter came. That this meant much self-denial on Lillian's part the grandmother knew, and she began to believe that she had some special aim in letting Jean remain so long with them.

As a matter of fact it was harder for Lillian Bennett than anyone knew. Nothing but the conviction that God was leading her enabled her to endure this long separation from her child. She thought many times of what Elizabeth had said about orderly unfoldment, and of the man who had tried to force his rose to bloom before its time, but the waiting was a testing-time for her.

Nevertheless, she felt convinced that Jean's place just now was with her father. During

these months of separation from husband and child she pondered much on the solemnity of the marriage vow. She pictured a home where the law of God was the rule of daily living, where Love was enthroned. That she might be given the opportunity to establish such a home was her earnest prayer. She recalled the pampered girl whom Bradford Bennett had married, and from her heart felt sorry for them both as they had been then. What chance had they had of happiness—she a spoiled child, and he ruled by appetite and self-will? It was a rare occurrence for them to take a meal alone together during the first year of their married life. The existence they led was one round of excitement, utterly barren of any real joy or happiness. More than once a blush rose to her cheeks as she remembered some of the scenes in which they had been participants during those years that they had been prominent in what was known as “the younger society set,” and when they had fully lived up—or rather down—to all that the term implied.

She realized now that the tragedy of their married life was one which, in greater or less

degree, had already been enacted thousands of times all over the country, and was still being enacted around them every day. The homes, luxurious in their appointments, which were mere camping places; the children left to the care of servants while their parents danced or gambled; the old people thrust into the back-ground, because their speech and manners gave evidence of the fact that they had been compelled to work for a living when they should have been in the school-room; these were not pleasant things to contemplate, but they were things which Lillian Bennett had seen, and with which for years she was appallingly familiar.

She sometimes marvelled at the great change which had come to her. It was as though a veil had fallen from her eyes and, for the first time in her life, she saw things as they really were. The thought that perhaps this same change was taking place in her husband filled her with joy and gratitude. What would it not mean for them both! A new heaven and a new earth!

Her period of waiting came to an end in due time, for a day arrived when Bradford went to

his mother and announced his intention of going to New York.

"I want to talk to you first, however," he said, sitting down beside her.

When he rose to go, she asked, with her usual practicality, what he proposed to do about McKane, now that his services as attendant were no longer needed.

"Mac and I won't part company, if I can help it," he said heartily. "If things turn out as I hope and expect, and I bring Lillian back with me, perhaps it would be better for us to set up a little ménage of our own, instead of living here as we have done since Jean was born, and in that case we can make good use of McKane. He's the handiest fellow I ever came across. I verily believe there's nothing he can't do."

"That would leave your father and me all alone in this big house," Mrs. Bennett said wistfully.

"How is that?"

"Hilda's engagement to Vincent Chalmers will be announced next month."

"Whew! She certainly runs to clericals! Well, marriages may or may not be made in

heaven, but this one has been made by ecclesiasticism, all right. I can see where the service at St. John's goes a step 'higher.' Incense galore, I suppose! Won't she be in her element? By this time next year half the young women in the parish will be vieing with each other in their attempts to copy the graceful genuflections of the rector's wife!"

"It seems very suitable in every way," Mrs. Bennett commented, in a tone of mild reproof.

"Looking back over the past," Bradford said earnestly, "I see that the one thing that held me back from the worst that could have happened to me was your simple goodness and love. You are so different from my father and Hilda—if you don't mind my saying so. It has always been much practice and little profession with you!"

"Oh, my dear, don't praise me like this!" she begged. "I'm not clever, like your father and Hilda. I don't know as much as they do."

"You know enough to have a heart," he said briefly, "and I thank you for all you have done for me—*Mother*."

He was not her own son, but as he stooped and kissed her forehead she knew that he was nearer to her than her own child had ever been.

CHAPTER XXV

Richard did not leave Morriston as soon as he had expected. In passing a newspaper office, about a week after his return from Baltimore, he glanced up and read the following bulletin—

“Crazy man tries to enter home of J. W. Bennett.”

He bought a copy of the paper from a newsboy and the same words met his eyes on the front page. Underneath was written, “John Barnes taken to police station and later to city hospital.”

The account told, with the usual newspaper gusto, how Barnes, demented from drink, had attempted to force an entrance into Mr. Bennett’s house about eight o’clock the evening before; declaring that the house was his and that he had a right to it and all it contained, and frightening the maid, who tried to keep him out, almost into hysterics. That, fortunately, he was speedily overpowered by a “man-serv-

ant," who heard the disturbance and came to the maid's assistance, and was kept under restraint until the police patrol arrived. Richard knew, of course, that the "man-servant" was McKane, and felt thankful that he had remained with the family instead of accompanying Bradford to New York. He went at once to the hospital, but was told that he could not see John Barnes, in fact it would probably be several weeks before anyone was allowed to see him.

He took a room in the same house with David, for he had left St. Luke's rectory and the housekeeper had returned to his mother in Baltimore. This latter event was one of the small tragedies of life, for the woman was devoted to Richard, and felt as if her world was tottering when she heard that he was about to leave the Episcopal ministry. The latter was glad to think that she would be with his mother, who would comfort her if anyone could.

He inquired each day at the hospital, either by telephone or in person, and at last there came an evening when he was informed that Barnes had been discharged and was at the home of his sister. This sister, who was a

widow and childless, worked in an underwear factory and managed, by much thrift, to keep two small rooms which she called home. There Richard found him.

He was a mere shadow of his former self, gaunt and white and emaciated. He sat huddled in a chair, when he had opened the door for Richard, a picture of abject wretchedness.

There was no empty bragging now about what he was going to do for his children. The thought of those children was as a scourge that lashed him day and night.

"I couldn't even keep 'em with me . . . after she was gone," he said in a low, grating voice, his eyes fixed on the floor, as though he had forgotten Richard's presence, "an' she was the best woman God ever made, the best wife any man ever had. An' I side-tracked her kids, that she thought the world of, when she wasn't here to see! 'Twas a dog's trick! What must you think of me . . . Mary . . . if you know? My God! she don't know—she *can't!*"

He hid his face in his hands, shuddering.

"I wake up in the middle of the night an' see

her lookin' at me," he went on, "just lookin', an' sayin' nothin', but her eyes seems to say, 'was this the man I marri'd?'"

Richard laid one hand on his shoulder.

"Barnes," he said steadily, "it is not too late for you to do what is right by your children. It is not too late for you to be the man your wife believed you to be—good woman that she was!"

Barnes took out a soiled handkerchief and wiped his eyes, without lifting his head.

"You can begin today," Richard went on, "and the fact that you recognize your own wrong doing is the very first step."

He shook his head.

"You don't know what you're talkin' about," he said dully. "In spite of what I just said, I wouldn't be sittin' here five minutes without a drink if I had the price o' one."

"I suppose," Richard said earnestly, "if anyone told you of some very hard thing that you could do in order to get rid of that appetite, you would do it for your children's sake?"

"Yes, sir, I would."

"But if I told you of a very simple thing you would probably reject it?"

"It don't seem as if no very simple thing would help me."

"There was a man once," Richard went on, "who needed help as much as you do, and a little girl told him of a man who, she felt sure, could aid him. He went to see this man, but because the thing he told him to do was very simple he went away angry and would not do it. Then some one suggested to him that if he had been told to do some hard thing he would probably have done it, so why not try the simple thing. He saw the reasonableness of this argument and turned round and did the simple thing, and he was healed."

John Barnes was looking at him with the first gleam of interest which he had so far shown in anything except his own miserable condition.

"It is for you to decide whether you will try this simple means or not," Richard continued. "I am not going to urge you. I am merely telling you of a way of escape."

Still Barnes hesitated, and Richard rose to go.

"I can't afford to take no chances, for the sake of them kids," the man said slowly, look-

ing up at him; "I'll do whatever you want me to do, Mr. Trent."

"That's spoken like the man Mary Barnes loved and believed in!" Richard said heartily. "Put on your hat and come with me."

As it was close on six o'clock Richard took him first to a restaurant and ordered a good meal. He had left a note for the sister telling her with whom he was, for he knew that if she returned home and found him gone she would dread the worst. Afterwards Barnes and he went to the mid-week service at the church which David Joyce attended.

It happened that one of the testimonies of healing, that evening, was from a man who had been released from a craving for alcohol. He was not a resident of Morriston; indeed, his home was in a distant state, but his business as a travelling salesman took him all over the country. He stated briefly that the taste for whisky had gained a hold on him before he was aware of it. That when he realized this he tried his best to give it up, but could not do so. That he gradually sank lower and lower until his wife and children were reduced to abject poverty. Then a man, whom in his better days

he had known well, told him of the Christ-healing, and at first he had scoffed at it, not being at all a religious man. "But after a while," he continued, "I began to think that if there was one chance in a hundred that I could be helped I'd better take that chance. I'm telling this tonight, because there may be some man here who feels about as I did the first time I attended one of these meetings. I went unknown to my wife. And what I heard there encouraged me, for, if what they said was true, other men had been freed from the curse that was dragging me down. I won't say that that appetite fell away from me all at once, for it didn't. But I will say this—that whenever the temptation to drink came upon me I was conscious of a power stronger than my own that held me back. I used to pray that prayer over and over again, 'I am thine, save me!' for the man who was helping me to gain an understanding of the truth told me to declare daily that in my real self-hood I was God's child, and that sin had no power over me. And I *was* saved. There came a day when I knew that I should never again want to touch whisky, and I never have. That was eight years ago, and

it has been eight years of blessedness, for my wife and children are one with me in this glorious truth that does, indeed, make us free."

John Barnes met this man at the close of the service and they talked for some time. That he was deeply impressed by what he had heard there was little doubt. Richard also introduced him to David and to Elizabeth, and when he heard that it was she who had his children in charge he turned aside to hide the shamed red which rose to his wan face. Richard and David went home with him and then returned to their own rooms rejoicing.

That was probably the very happiest night of Richard Trent's life. He had had his first taste of the ministry which obeys fully the Master's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Heal the sick." He knew that, at last, he was in vital contact with absolute truth. Only those who in their inner consciousness have thus touched the seamless garment of the Christ know what this means. For such there can henceforth be but one path, that of complete identification with the spiritual ideal which was trodden by the Master.

CHAPTER XXVI

Nevertheless, two weeks from that day saw John Barnes on the way to a saloon.

When the old craving for liquor had come upon him that morning he had honestly tried to apply what he had learned about God, but apparently to no effect. At last he had picked up his hat doggedly and left the house.

He was not bound for any of his usual haunts, but for a bar that he knew of in the Swedish section of the city, where he would not be liable to meet anyone he knew, and as he walked he turned a silver dollar over and over in his pocket with feverish eagerness.

He had thought many times that day of what the man at the meeting had said, "Whenever the temptation to drink came upon me, I was conscious of a power stronger than my own that held me back."

"Guess I'm not one o' the kind that's easy saved," he thought now, "for there don't seem to be no power stronger than myself that's

helpin' me or holding me back. Guess I ain't worth savin' anyhow."

He turned a corner and found himself suddenly face to face with Elizabeth Bray.

"Why, Mr. Barnes!" she exclaimed, "how glad I am to meet you! I was beginning to think I was completely lost. I am not at all familiar with this part of the city, and I want to find number 42, Upsala Street."

John Barnes stood still and stared at her. If one of the figures which as a child he had been accustomed to think of as angels, with billowy white robes and out-stretched wings, had descended and stood in his path he could not have been more astonished.

"Upsala Street is somewhere in this neighborhood, is it not?" Elizabeth asked.

"Yes," he answered mechanically, "it's down this street a little way."

"You were going in that direction?" she inquired, and he nodded.

They walked on together, past the door of the saloon which John Barnes had intended to enter. She began to tell him some of the pretty sayings, with which his younger little girl, who was just beginning to talk, amused them.

"She can almost say her own name, Mary Barnes," Elizabeth continued. "It was her mother's name, was it not?"

"Yes."

"I never knew a child who had a sunnier laugh. It is the merriest little chuckle possible, and seems to bubble up so spontaneously that one can't help joining with her."

He did not answer. He remembered another Mary Barnes, who was only a child when he first knew her, who used to laugh just like that. Indeed, the baby was more like her in every way than either of the other children.

When they reached the street which Elizabeth was seeking he pointed out the number she wanted and they said goodbye. He stood for some minutes looking after her.

"Goin' to find somebody else's neglected kids, I suppose," he muttered. "Wonder if the mother's dead, an' the father drinkin' up the money that ought to be supportin' 'em?"

He turned and looked back at the saloon, but he did not retrace his steps. Instead he walked on to a small city park and sat down under the trees.

"Queer," he thought, "that I should meet

her, of all people, an' that she begun to talk the way she did."

After a while, as he sat there, the craving which his encounter with Elizabeth had temporarily dispelled, returned upon him. He had never before known what temptation might be, for he had always yielded to its first suggestion. Now he was not yielding, and it seemed as if the very forces of hell had allied themselves against him. He sat with hands thrust deep into his pockets, his head sunk between his shoulders, while wave after wave of appetite beat upon him. He turned the silver dollar over and over between his fingers. All at once it slipped from his grasp. Here and now he must meet this thing! If he was ever to be saved he must be saved now! He did not know much about God, but he clung to what he did know with all the strength of his being. He felt that if he went under this time he would never come up again, and he found himself muttering, "If there's a God, He'll stand by me now," and once he raised his desperate eyes to the sky and said, "If what they told me about You was true, You'll save me now!"

It was a strange prayer, but then John

Barnes was not used to prayer. By degrees he became aware of a sense of quiet and calm. The tide of temptation was receding, and as he realized this he drew a breath of relief, while his tense body relaxed. He leaned his head back against the tree under which he sat, and the figures of some boys who were playing in the distance became blurred and confused before his gaze. In a few minutes he was asleep.

He was awakened about an hour later by hearing his wife laugh, as he thought. He had been dreaming about her—nothing very remarkable or pathetic, but that jumble of things long ago forgotten, which sometimes comes to us in sleep. Indeed, much of the dream was probably the outcome of his recent conversation with Elizabeth, although he was not aware of this fact. There had been a boy in the seventh grade with Mary and himself at school, a boy who had a trick of twisting the first letters of words, thereby making of his conversation unintelligible gibberish. John Barnes had not thought of this boy for years, but in his dream he seemed to see and hear him quite plainly, and he heard Mary laugh at something this boy said, just as she used to laugh—the

low, pleasant little chuckle of mirth which unconsciously gave evidence of that nice disposition that had made her such a favorite at school, and which her youngest child seemed to have inherited.

The whole atmosphere of the dream was so clean and pure and wholesome that it appeared to wipe out completely all that had come between. It was the past dreadful year that seemed like a dream now. He had awakened with a boy's smile upon his lips and a boy's gladness in his heart. He had awakened to a new world, a cleansed world, although he was as yet only vaguely aware of this fact, but he was blessedly aware of the all-enfolding sense of peace that filled his consciousness.

"If He saved me that time—He'll always save me," he thought with child-like dependence as he walked home. In which he but voiced the same conviction that another man, in a very different walk of life, had expressed long years before, when he wrote—

"His love in the past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink,
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me right through."

CHAPTER XXVII

Some two years later David Joyce sat in his own room one night writing a letter, which when it was finished he addressed to, "Mr. and Mrs. Richard Trent, Brookline, Mass." and which ran as follows—

"Dear Richard and Elizabeth,

"Whenever I write the names of you two dear people together like that I have to lay down my pen and look at them for a while, they look so good to me!

"Well, here's my love to you both—I've got to get some of that out of my system before I can go on!

"I wish you could have been at our Wednesday evening meeting tonight, for there were two testimonies which, I know, would have meant a great deal to you. One was from John Barnes, not the testimony of his healing of the desire for liquor, he had already given that, but of the healing of hate.

"He said that there was a man whose father had done his father an injury in a business way, and whom from earliest childhood he had been taught to hate. That, almost before he could speak plainly, his father taught him to curse this man, and would laugh with a grim delight when he did so. As he grew to manhood he never saw the man or any of his family, or heard his name mentioned, without giving vent to a string of oaths, and on two occasions he had actually tried to wreak vengeance on him. He said that of late he had ceased to think of him at all; in fact the entire circumstance seemed to have passed out of his recollection, and that last week when he passed him on the street, riding in his motor-car, he was surprised to find that all feeling of resentment against him had vanished. 'There was a time when that sight would have filled my heart with murder,' he went on, 'but I've come to see that the only real poverty there is, is the desire for material things, and that I, even with the little understanding I have of God, am richer than that man, with all his motor-cars and bank account.' Think of that from John Barnes! Truly does God choose the weak things of the world to con-

found the things that are mighty! There is something in that thought, that poverty or riches is merely a matter of desire, for us all to ponder upon.

"John went on to say that a few days after this healing had come to him he received a letter saying that steps were being taken to set right this old wrong. I had already heard that Bradford Bennett, who has almost entire control of the carpet mills now, had put the firm's books into the hands of expert accountants in order to find out just what they owed John Barnes as royalty on his father's inventions. John ended his testimony by saying, 'As long as I was hating anyone I was blocking the channel through which good could come to me, and when the hate was destroyed the good just flowed in.' "

"The other testimony was from Bradford Bennett himself; not his first, either, I understand, but the first I have heard. In a few simple words he told how the law of heredity had been annulled for him and how 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus' had made him free. I watched his face while he was speaking and I could not help being impressed by its

calm and strength and peace. I thought of those words, ‘Clothed and in his right mind and sitting at the feet of Jesus.’ Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

“The ‘Bradfords’ say that they are going to spend a week-end with you before long, and if it will not tax the capacity of the ‘bunglehouse’ too much I would like to come at the same time. Mrs. ‘Bradford’ is doing splendid work among the little ones in our Sunday school, and Jean and I are fast friends. Did you know that John Barnes’ sister has given up her work in the underwear factory and is keeping house for him and the kiddies? When the final settlement is made with Bennett and Son, John is going to buy about five acres of land not too far from the city and have a little market-farm. It’s what he has always wanted to do; and he says to tell you that by this time next year he will be able to supply you with all the fresh vegetables you need, and that you must look upon the farm as your summer home.

“Well, I could keep on scribbling for hours, but suppose I must bring my epistle to a close.

“With a heart full of love for you both—

“DAVID.”

At the same hour in another city a man sat alone in his library, with an open Bible on his knees. Bishop Carrington had aged in the last few years and there were lines of weariness on his fine face. He was reading from the twenty-first chapter of Revelation:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

As the clock struck his usual hour for retiring he rose and closing the book laid it on the table. Standing with one hand resting upon

it, he lifted his face—the unmistakable face of a seeker after God—and prayed:

“Let me not, O Lord! be of those who say that Thy evangel must come in ‘this’ way, and cannot come in ‘that’ way. Let me not be of those who question, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ Only let the New Jerusalem appear; only let ‘thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ Amen.”

THE END











